

MELISSA AND MARCIA

OR THE

S I S T E R S:

A NOVEL.

“ When summer smiles to warn the melting heart
“ Of luxury’s allurements.”

AKENSIDE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. II.

L O N D O N

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By Mrs Elizabeth Hervey

MELISSA and MARCIA,

OR,

THE SISTERS.

CHAP. XI.

THE UNEXPECTED MEETING.

AN EPISODE.

LORD and Lady Westland had not long been gone from the Hall, before some flying touches of the gout determined Mr. Bumble to go to Bath.

VOL. II.

B

Marcia

Marcia had never been there, and did not expect she should derive much pleasure from this journey, except the gratification that change of scene affords to the mind; for she knew her Father too well to suppose he would allow her to enter into the gaieties of the place: *These*, perhaps, she would sometimes have wished to participate in, had not the secret inclination she still felt for St. Clairfont, rendered her indifferent to every thing which did not directly or indirectly refer to that object.

Arrived at Bath, her first care was to get the best piano forte, and the most celebrated music master of the place. — She had of late somewhat neglected her music, her mind having been constantly disturbed ever since she left Gray-Lodge:—But now she indulged herself in playing over St. Clairfont's favourite pieces, and felt,
while

while thus employed, an exquisite sensation of delight.—Music revived those sentiments which absence had somewhat weakened, and her imagination, at once lively and tender, represented him to her in the most charming colours.

Her unwearied attention to please her Father, with whom she was constantly confined; her perfect acquiescence in all his caprices; her amiable temper, which never varied, wrought upon a character, savage even as was the Justice's, and induced him to make some efforts to amuse her. — He could not help observing how very different her conduct was to that of the generality of modern young Ladies, and he felt proud of his daughter.—Occasionally he hobbled with her to the rooms, and frequently to the play; but he did not

extend his complaisance so far as to carry her to the balls.

One night, as Marcia was at the theatre with her Father, the sound of a voice in the box adjacent to hers penetrated to her heart, and made her look with infinite emotion to see who sat in the box.—The first object she beheld was St. Clairfont; his eyes met hers, and covered her with blushes, and when he hastily drew near and spoke to her, she trembled so much she could scarcely answer him.

Mr. Bumble cordially shook hands with St. Clairfont, and the latter presented to him, and Marcia, his sister Mrs. Belfield.—Marcia, though naturally shy, entered very readily into conversation with St. Clairfont's sister, and was agreeably surprised to hear their lodgings joined: A secret sympathy

pathy seemed to unite these Ladies in friendship, and they did not part without mutual assurances of seeing each other often.

Marcia's mind, on her return home, was too much agitated to permit her to sleep : Though St. Clairfont had said nothing particular to her, she had perceived his colour change when he first saw her, and his hand had trembled when he had led her to her chair.

The next morning she talked much to her Father of the pleasure she proposed to herself from Mrs. Belfield's society ; she might have added what share St. Clairfont would contribute towards it ; but *that* she chose to suppress, and she was still talking of Mrs. Belfield, and thinking of the Colonel when they arrived.—All her

resolution could not conceal the flurry of her spirits on this occasion.

Mr. Bumble, who had always liked St. Clairfont, seemed glad to see him, and, fortunately for Marcia, Mrs. Belfield, not being in the least a fine Lady, pleased her Father. — The Ladies soon grew extremely intimate, and the two families passed most of their time together. — St. Clairfont and his sister used to play at backgammon with Mr. Bumble, and, as they put up with his crabbed humour, they entirely won his heart. — Marcia now saw the man she adored very frequently; but, alas! she was not the happier for it. — She could not help observing, that since the first night they had met, his eyes never had betrayed the slightest pleasure at seeing her; on the contrary, they seemed averted from her. — If by accident he found her alone, the circumstance

cumstance seemed to embarrass him ; his natural taciturnity was encreased, and he hastened to quit her. — The dejection of his countenance, and the deep sighs that escaped him, convinced her that he was unhappy. — “Some fatal passion embitters his days,” said she to herself : “Alas ! he is in love, but not with me ! Were I the object of his affection, what should prevent his declaring it ? How came I ever to fancy he loved me ? What an infatuation ! — Yet his eyes at times seemed to assure me his sentiments corresponded to my own ; but certainly I have deceived myself ; it is but too evident that he regards me with indifference.” — This idea had a cruel effect upon Marcia ; she grew pale, thin, and, in spite of all her efforts to assume a chearful countenance, her eyes frequently glistened with tears. — Mrs. Belfield, a stranger to the effects of love, attributed to

B 4 indisposition

indisposition the change she perceived in her young friend ; she imagined her attention to her Father occasioned her to pass too sedentary a life ; she therefore thought it right to entice her out, and was perpetually pressing her to accompany her in her walks and rides : To render the party more agreeable, she insisted on her brother's accompanying them ; he frequently, however, contrived some engagement that might prevent his attending them.

Let us now visit the re-united pair at Beachly ; apparently every thing went on well. — Melissa having by experience found that, though Lord Westland was terrible when his anger was roused, yet it was no difficult matter to govern him. — She was convinced her future happiness depended on the ascendancy she meant to gain on his mind ; to accomplish this point

point she feigned an abhorrence of her past conduct, a cordial forgiveness of her captivity, and a renewal of that tenderness she had once pretended to feel for him.

It will easily be imagined, that two characters so opposite as those of Lady Westland and Lady Leonora Gray could not heartily coalesce: The former underwent a cruel penance, in listening to discourses of which she did not understand three syllables; yet, after the late *ecclat*, the support of a person of her rank and character seemed a desirable sanction, she therefore feigned an admiration for her aunt's extraordinary abilities, and endeavoured, by the most flattering attentions, to win her regard.

On the other hand, Lady Leonora, though she despised her, for her ignorance, commended the sweetness of
B 5 her

her disposition, and admired the docility with which she received her lectures.—Courtied and amused by her nephew and niece, she was in high good humour.

The weather being now very severe, the party adjourned to Grosvenor-Square.—Melissa could not, without great emotion, re-visit a town from which she had been torn so precipitately.—Colonel Philamour continued abroad to her great satisfaction: The impresson he had made on her, though attended with such fatal consequences, had been less deep than might have been imagined, and it has been seen that a short absence totally obliterated it. — Whether Lady Westland would have been tempted to have renewed her intimacy with Lady Wander, I know not; but, just as she arrived in town, Sir John and Lady Wander

Wander had thought it extremely *convenient* to take a little tour to France, having lately discovered that the air of Great-Britain was very prejudicial to their healths.—Melissa now entered again into the world: The strong support given her by Lord Westland and his family occasioned her to be received with more indulgence than she dared to expect, with the exception of a few persons (uncommonly delicate in the choice of their acquaintance) who appeared shy to her; she was treated in general as before.

As she had long been convinced that her misfortunes arose from her want of prudence, she adopted quite a new style of conduct.—She recalled to mind *les bienséances*, so strongly recommended by Lady Wander, which she had totally neglected.—Henceforward, whatever gratifications she

might be induced to allow her passions in private, she resolved in public to appear a pattern of discretion; in short, to change the character of a coquette for that of a prude. — In pursuance of this plan, she never went into public without being accompanied by her Lord or Lady Leonora; her gay companions were shunned; no dangles allowed to follow her, and, in lieu of the wild, unrestrained gaiety of her former behaviour, she assumed a composed dignified air, and modesty corrected her dress as well as her countenance. — Lord Westland, enraptured at this change, became more enamoured than ever; he formed to himself a most charming picture of domestic felicity, which she seemed disposed to realize. — As nothing but her former aversion to *home* had driven him from it, he now readily expunged his name from several clubs, which he frequented assiduously during

ring her abode at the Castle, and passed most of his evenings in little parties in Grosvenor-Square; these, towards the end of the spring, became more frequent, owing to a *circumstance* respecting Lady Westland, which promised to encrease his domestic felicity.

Amongst those who never failed to make one of the Westland's society, was the Earl's particular friend, Sir Harry Basil. — His frequent visits, however, were more the effect of Lord Westland's importunity than of his own inclination. — Passionately fond of women, he did not care to expose himself to Lady Westland's bewitching charms: He loved Lord Westland, and he had principles of the strictest honour, but he did not wish to expose them to *too* severe a trial. — He doubted of Lady Westland's reformation; the change appeared to him too sudden to be sincere: Certain

rain equivocal glances had in unguarded moments fallen from her eye over his person, which denoted, that she was by no means inattentive to a fine figure ; and it was not without difficulty that he could restrain his eyes, or his tongue, from expressing his gratitude for the favour.

One night, after having supped in Grosvenor-Square, he found, on his return home, a note artfully slipped into his coat pocket :—He trembled, and almost doubted whether he should open it. The temptation, however, being irresistible, he unfolded it, and found, in a disguised hand, the following words :

“ Is it possible, that a man of Sir
“ Harry Basil’s gallantry should not
“ perceive the impression he has made
“ on a heart too susceptible for its
“ own repose ?—It has, alas ! indured
“ many

“ many painful conflicts, with reason
 “ and modesty, before it could resolve
 “ to avow a passion he seems deter-
 “ mined not to see.—If curiosity, or
 “ a more flattering motive, should
 “ induce him to wish for any further
 “ explanation, he may depend upon
 “ receiving it, if he will place the
 “ large cameo, he usually wears on
 “ the little finger of his right-hand,
 “ on his left, - the first time he
 “ visits his friend in Grosvenor-
 “ Square.”

“ Good God !” cried Sir Harry,
 “ what an abandoned woman is this !

— Yet she is lovely as an angel !” —

Agitated by contending passions, now
 melting into tenderness, now checked
 by friendship ; one moment longing
 to profit by his good fortune, the
 next shock'd and disgusted at it ; he
 was unresolved how to act : At last
 honour obtained the victory, and he
 determined

determined to hasten out of town the very next morning. — He did so, but his stay was very short; a call of the House of Commons summoned him to town: In traversing Hyde-Park, in his way home, he met Lord Westland, who, reproaching him for his abrupt departure, insisted on his going home with him to dinner. — Sir Harry, having in vain endeavoured to be excused, entered Lord Westland's house, with an agitation that he could scarcely conceal, which was considerably encreased when he found the Countess alone in the drawing-room, where Lord Westland left him while he went to dress. — Nothing could astonish Sir Harry more than the easy, serene air with which she received him; not the least confused, she entered into conversation upon indifferent subjects: At last, as if recollecting herself all at once, she said, "Pray, Sir Harry, did you receive my

my

my note?" — Sir Harry, petrified at the question, and at a loss what to answer, remained silent, with his eyes fixed on the ground. — "Did you hear me?" cried Melissa. — "I did, Madam," stammered out the Baronet; but honour, friendship, — — — — — "What," interrupted she, "are you talking of? What have honour and friendship to do with the subject I wrote to you upon?" — "Faith, Madam, I thought they were very much concerned; but — — — — — "Ridiculous! upon my word," said Lady Westland, laughing; "I cannot see how either can suffer by your accompanying Lord Westland, myself, and a large party, to dine at Richmond the day after to-morrow." — Sir Harry, confounded beyond measure, did not know what to think; whether it was an artful turn of Lady Westland's, or whether some other person had written the billet: His knowledge of

her

her character, however, inclined him still to think *her* to be it's author; and he supposed that, piqued at his coldness, she now meant to disavow it. — In the midst of his perplexity Lady Leonora and Miss Gray entered, which relieved him not a little; but fresh cause for surprise now occurred: — Miss Gray, who had always been particularly civil and attentive to him, appeared to be extremely out of humour: Chance (not inclination) had placed him next to her at dinner, and he found her so sullen, that he could not obtain a word from her. — At last she said to him in a low voice, "Let me look at your ring." — Some suspicion now darted into his mind, that Hecatissa might have written the note, that had given him so much disquiet. — Vexed at the blunder he had made, full of disgust and contempt for his neighbour, he scarcely deigned to tell her he had not got it
on.

on. — The moment dinner was over he hastened to his own house, where he found the note Lady Westland alluded to, and rejoiced inexpressibly at finding her innocent; he resolved boldly to return into Miss Gray's own hands the billet she had deposited into his pocket: Such a mark of contempt he imagined the most effectual means of stopping the progress of her forward passion.

That very evening he returned to Lord Westland's, and, watching for a favourable opportunity, presented the billet as he had intended; Miss Gray received it with complacency, not discovering that it was *that* she had written: Soon after she withdrew, and, as she did not appear at supper, and had pleaded indisposition as an excuse, he could no longer doubt of her being the author. — To his great joy he heard no more of it; he bore with

with *resignation* the ill-humour occasioned by her disappointment, and attended Lord and Lady Westland to Richmond: The latter several times rallied him on the singular expressions he had made use of relative to the Richmond party, and he came off but indifferently, by pretending they had escaped him in an absent fit. — From that time he perceived Lady Westland set a guard on her eyes, no longer apprehensive of their bewitching influence, he visited as usual in Grosvenor-Square. — Miss Gray's *penchant* had given place to an aversion which she did not endeavour to disguise; nobody but Sir Harry knew the cause, and he had too much honour to reveal it.

Marcia was still at Bath; her fatal passion unabated, but it was no longer a secret to Mrs. Belfield; she had at length perceived that her brother was
the

the sole cause of her friend's dejected appearance; the emotion visible in her countenance, even at the mention of his name, betrayed her.

One morning, when Marcia came to visit Mrs. Belfield, she found a small box on the table, which she opened by her friend's desire, and was struck with the picture of one of the most beautiful faces she had ever seen; after admiring it for some minutes, she expressed a curiosity to know whether it was drawn from the life, or from the painter's imagination.—“It is,” said Mrs. Belfield with a sigh, “an exact imitation of nature; it, indeed, scarcely did justice to the beautiful girl whom it represented.”—“Is she then dead?” asked Marcia, with an air of interest. — “No,” replied Mrs. Belfield, “she is still alive; but, alas! grief has probably, still more than time, faded that lovely face.”—
Mrs.

Mrs. Belfield paused ; her mind seemed engrossed by some melancholy remembrance ; at last turning to Marcia, " Sit down, my dear," said she ; it is time you should be informed of some anecdotes relative to our family ; the history of the original of that portrait will form a part of my narration."

My Father possessed in lineal descent a very considerable estate, and my Mother brought him a fortune, which in those days was considered as large ; the family estate was entailed on the eldest son proceeding from that marriage ; part of my Mother's fortune went to the payment of some debts on my Father's estate, and the rest was settled on younger children. —Several years elapsed between the birth of Henry and mine, and we alone, out of several children, survived infancy.

My

My father's mind was usually engrossed by some darling pursuit that diverted his attention from family concerns; he had some pride in my brother, who promised to do his family no small credit, but he scarcely noticed me, 'till one day an antiquarian, one of his great friends, discovered that I was extremely like the bust of Agrippina, the wife of Germanicus; from that moment he grew partial to me.—Early in life he had imbibed a love of virtù, and a long abode in Italy had furnished him with opportunities of cultivating his passion for the fine arts.—He had been taught to believe, by those whose interest it was to dupe him, that no person possessed so refined a taste, so exquisite a judgment as himself.—Every day he added something to his collection of pictures and statues.—He kept up a constant correspondence with the most famous virtuosi in all countries;

countries; was the first to be informed of any recent discovery in the antique way; and more than once hastened to Italy to give his opinion on some mutilated statue newly dug up.

His house in town, though spacious, was soon much too small to contain all his treasures; he resolved, therefore, to build another, which was to be a monument of his own taste in architecture: He himself drew the plan; it was admired by his flatterers; and in a short time completed.— Here, indeed, he had a noble apartment for his collection, which occupied one entire floor. — All attention to the offices had been overlooked; the two pair of stairs rooms were very low and ill-contrived, so was the attic; but he had the satisfaction of inhabiting a house built in the purest Grecian style, that had only the trifling defect of being destitute of convenience.

Scarce

Scarce had my father been lodged two years amidst his gods and goddesses, than he discovered evident symptoms of disgust; the pleasure of novelty over, his mind languished after some more active enjoyment.

Gardening presented to his imagination an endless source of delight. — His seat in the west, which he had never visited, except for the purpose of raising money, was now rapidly explored, and a variety of improvements designed. — Woods were cut down; ground was levelled; mountains pared away; water forced out of its course; and arable land converted into a spacious lawn.

My mother, who had borne patiently with all the inconvenience of her house, built in *the purest Grecian style*, now repined at my father's lavish prodigality, on the score of

improvement; she ventured even to doubt he had succeeded; and, finally, was convinced the alterations had spoiled the place.—She regretted the shade of some venerable elms that formed a stately avenue through the park to the house, near a mile long: No friendly grove remained for her to saunter in, sheltered from the noon-tide beam. — The house stood on a bare eminence, exposed to every blast, surrounded by an extensive lawn of coarse scanty grass, that neither pains nor expence had hitherto been able to fine and smooth into a velvet green-sward. — She grumbled at the kitchen-garden's being sent into exile a mile and a half distance from its old station: She saw, with disgust, plantations of firs displace forest trees; and perceived no reason for filling up some excellent fish ponds that were particularly convenient for the numerous tribe of aquatic fowl which she

she delighted in rearing.—Every year added to my father's difficulties, but still he retrenched not: A rage for farming, which he did not in the least understand, compleated his ruin: He was obliged to sell his fine house in town; but though he was offered a considerable sum for his best marbles, he refused to part with them; these he contrived to secrete with some of his most valuable pictures. His circumstances continued much embarrassed, and his creditors very importunate.—He had exhausted every resource, and at last was obliged to put his estate to nurse, and quit England.—His creditors agreed to allow him a small annuity, which, with my mother's pin-money, enabled him to support his family very decently in the south of France, where every article of life was much cheaper at that time than it is at present. My mother's partiality for her native country made her quit it with a

heavy heart; but the habit of affliction had worn down the edge of all sensibility in her disposition, therefore she suffered less than many persons would have done in her situation. — The trouble of moving, and inconveniences attendant on a long voyage, engrossed all her thoughts; nothing was so grievous to her as to be put out of her way.

On the road she disliked every thing; half starved herself rather than submit to the cookery of the country; and offended those who were disposed to be civil to her, by comparing every thing she saw with what she had seen in England, and always in favor of her own country. — At last we settled at Montpellier, and my brother was sent to an academy at Turin, to finish his education. — The best masters of Montpellier were procured for me; and my mother resolved to employ
her

her time in superintending my education.

At first we lived very retired, but by degrees we formed an acquaintance with the principal families in the town; my mother retained many of her English prejudices, but insensibly they diminished.—Amongst those my father and mother frequented chiefly, were the Count and Countess de Salenciere; shortly a strict intimacy ensued; the Count had a taste for prints, and my father discovered in himself an admiration for them, of which he was before wholly unconscious; soon it became a passion, and no company but that of the Count's pleased him.—He was now well reconciled to his situation, and engaged with his new friend in forming a collection of the finest prints; this could not be done without money, which he had now no method of procuring but

by pinching his family: Economy became his favorite theme; he constantly recommended it to us, but rarely practised it himself.

The Countess de Salenciere was an amiable woman; her manners were soft and gentle; her understanding good, though little cultivated; her disposition was chearful, fond of pleasure, with an imagination fertile in resources to procure it.—My mother, who had hitherto been distinguished by the appellation of *la triste Anglaise*, ceased to be so after she had been some time in Madame de Salenciere's society. — “You English,” said the Countess, “add not a little to the real evils in life, by affecting a contempt for those trifles that amuse a French woman; and still more by that abominable trick of thinking — When I was young I entered with spirit into every scheme that promised amuse-

amusement. — My age and my health now oblige me to content myself with promoting that of others; and I do assure you, when I see a party of young people, all innocently gay and happy, amusing themselves with all their hearts and souls, I feel myself again in my summer. — If any thing goes wrong, I never sit myself down and reflect upon it, for ten to one my meditations will only make it appear still worse. — My only care is to avoid self-reproach; time and patience mitigate all evils that do not originate in ourselves." — My mother did not examine whether Madame de Salenciere's mode of reasoning was just; she contented herself with adopting her style of life; and shortly found, that a *determination* to be satisfied with one's situation, goes a great way towards making one so in reality. — Madame de Salenciere had a niece who lived with her. — Pauline de Monteul was

much about my age, not at all handsome, yet she had the whitest teeth, and the most brilliant black eyes imaginable. — She appeared wild, giddy, and thoughtless, to possess much good humour, and little feeling. — Though she never said any thing that was worth remembering, her vivacity rendered her conversation lively and entertaining; sometimes, indeed, her comical remarks and exuberant mirth discomposed that propriety of behaviour I had, from my infancy, been accustomed to observe before my parents. — My mother's disposition, cold and reserved, always kept me in awe of her. — She never neglected her duty in essential points; but she had little indulgence for our foibles; never attempted to gain our confidence; and had no idea of blending the friend with the mother. — Accustomed, therefore, to be little noticed (except by my brother, who had ever
loved

loved me tenderly) I was delighted with my new companion; we were perpetually together; young and inexperienced, I was easily deceived by Pauline's professions of regard, though upon a longer acquaintance I was convinced she had too little feeling to be capable of any generous sentiment.

Our friends, the Salencieres, had an only son, who was about two years older than my brother, and educated, as well as himself, at Turin. — Here Mrs. Belfield was interrupted by Mr. Bumble's sudden entrance; and she was obliged to defer the continuation of her Narrative. — Marcia felt interested for the original of the portrait; and an inquietude that she could not account for.

C H A P. XII.

CONTINUATION OF THE EPISODE.

THE next morning Mrs. Belfield, at Marcia's entreaty, resumed her Narration.

“A similarity of disposition,” said she, “between young Salenciere and my brother, soon united them in the strictest friendship. — They were not only inseparable companions at the academy, but likewise when they came to pass the vacation at Montpellier. — The least offence offered to one, was sure to be resented by the other; and both were anxious to return the kindnesses shewn to either: The Count and my father, saw with pleasure, this intimacy, and encouraged it. —

Louis

Louis de Salenciere was more fashion-
 ed than my brother; he excelled in
 all manly exercifes. — He could tame
 the moſt unmanageable horſe; vault
 upon the ſaddle with ſurpriſing activity,
 and maintain himſelf there with a ſkill
 that baffled every endeavour of the
 beaſt to diſmount him. — He was rec-
 koned to fence better than any young
 man in France; and he danced with
 an eaſe and grace that won him no
 ſmall favor with our ſex. — But if
 Henry was inferior to him in theſe
 ſhowy accompliſhments, he was much
 ſuperior to him in intellectual acqui-
 ſitions. — His mind was highly poliſh-
 ed; he was well read in ancient and
 modern authors; delighted in poetry;
 and, in ſecret, courted the muſes;
 but not ſo as to divert his attention
 from more ſerious ſtudies.

Henry, even at that early period
 of his life, was grave; naturally of a

contemplative turn.—Louis de Salenciere had a great deal of fire and vivacity, and passions less under the restraint of reason than Henry.—Both were equally generous, and both had the same principles of honour and integrity.

When they left the academy, my father determined my brother should travel, which was a sad vexation to our little society.—The addition of two such amiable young men animated it extremely.—Pauline, in particular, seemed to feel Henry's approaching departure.—He had not distinguished her as she wished, tho' her eyes frequently reproached him for his cruelty.—To me he did not dissemble the disgust her behaviour excited in his breast, and lamented that she was the destined wife of his friend.—Henry would have been happy had Louis been permitted to accom-

accompany him into Italy; but the Count de Salenciere thought it time to celebrate the nuptials of Louis and Pauline. — Perhaps he had seen her partiality for my brother; she had taken little pains to dissemble it; be that as it may, he refused to let his son travel, and shortly after Henry's departure the young people were married.

My brother was absent a twelve-month; his return diffused great joy in our family, and none of us were more happy to see him than Louis de Salenciere. — The Countess Louis (for so Pauline was now called) received him very coldly; she had not forgotten how ineffectually she had attempted to gain his heart. — He always treated her with the respect due to his friend's wife; but avoided all opportunities of cultivating any intimacy with her.

My

My brother was now more than grave, he was melancholy; his mind seemed deeply disturbed, but the cause was a mystery. — The only thing that amused him was riding out on horse-back of a morning with Louis de Salenciere; and few days passed, whether the weather was favorable or not, without Henry and his friend's taking their daily airing. — Several months passed without any material change in my brother: My health at that time was very indifferent; the physicians apprehended that I was consumptive, and I was advised to ride. Though tenderly beloved by Henry, I could perceive he did not wish I should accompany him in his rides, and on no other condition would my mother consent to my venturing on horse-back. — Louis de Salenciere was gone with his wife to visit some of her relations, so that only a servant attended us. — When one evening,
as

as Henry and I were walking together, just before supper, in a small garden belonging to our house, he said to me, "I think, my dear Harriet, that you have sufficient discretion to be trusted with a secret — I ask you not to promise you will not betray me, because I am sure you are incapable of it; but as one unguarded word might ruin me, I must tell you, the happiness of my life depends upon its never transpiring. — At present I see my mother coming; but be ready to attend me to-morrow morning at seven o'clock, and you shall know all."

You will easily imagine, my dear Marcia, how impatient I was for the next day. In early youth no passion is stronger than curiosity. — I was ready in the morning before six, looked at my watch every five minutes, and thought my brother never would arrive.

rive. — At length he came; we mounted our horses, and the instant we left the door, I assured him that I was highly flattered at the proof he had given me of his regard, and that I never would reveal what he had promised to communicate to me. — He said, that he was convinced I might safely be trusted; but, added he, “Ask me no questions; I chuse to have the pleasure of surprising you.” — I tried in vain to make him explain himself; he begged me to be patient, and that very shortly my curiosity would be gratified. — After riding about a league we found ourselves in a wide open country; one small group of trees alone broke the sameness of the scene. — The spire of a church, and some openings in the wood, discovered a hamlet to be there embosomed. — My brother now spurred on his horse, and I cantered as briskly as I could after him. — He stopped

stopped before a high hedge, and hastened to alight : I did not wait for his assistance, but jumped off my horse instantly, put my hand under his arm, and was led by him through a little wicket gate to a neat cottage, shaded by some lofty trees from the sun, and separated by a pretty garden full of shrubs and flowers, from the rest of the village. — Henry rung at the door, which was opened by a decent looking woman, who expressed great joy at seeing him, and said she would run and tell her Lady of his arrival. — I could not imagine how all this was to end, but I had no time for conjectures : My brother conducted me into a small parlour, where an elderly Lady waited to receive us; but she appeared extremely weak and emaciated, and, as she attempted to rise, was supported by a lovely girl with the air of Hebe. — We both entreated her not to move : Henry tenderly

tenderly chid her for this exertion, and, gracefully bending one knee, he took her hand and kissed it. — He then presented me to her and the young Lady, and both embraced me, with many expressions of kindness. — “Your brother, Mademoiselle,” said Madame de Preulet (for that was her name) is our Guardian Angel; we owe him more than - - -” — Henry interrupted, and entreated her not to exhaust her spirits in praising him, but she would not be silenced. — “Let me speak, St. Clairfont,” said she; “I am rather better to-day, and must tell your amiable sister, the obligations we have to you. — Did you not relieve my daughter and self from the most wretched state of penury? — Are we not indebted to you for more than our lives, for the preservation of Theresa’s honour? — Do we not experience from you daily in this comfortable asylum the kindest
and.

and most delicate attentions? Since, alas! we never can repay these inestimable obligations, ah! refuse not at least our slender tribute of gratitude!" — Madame de Preulet's eyes filled with tears, and the young person exclaimed with equal emotion, "He may refuse to hear the praises to which he is entitled, but he cannot stop the current of our thoughts; and, Heaven alone knows (raising her lovely blue eyes) how my heart overflows with gratitude!" — St. Clairfont terminated this conversation, by enquiring whether Madame de Preulet had seen her physician the preceding day, and what he had said? — "He is very encouraging," said she, with a faint smile, "and talked more like a friend than a physician." — I now addressed the Ladies with all the kindness I felt towards them, and lamented it was not in my power to do them any service. — "You can do us a very essential

essential one," cried Mademoiselle de Preulet, "by often honouring us with your company."—Henry desired her to favour us with a sonata on the harp, and she gracefully complied.—I saw she now and then stole a look at my brother, expressive of more than gratitude; yet I perceived modesty corrected the sensibility of her heart, and endeavoured to conceal its tenderness.—As nothing checked his feelings, he gazed on her with impassioned tenderness, and listened to her performance with rapture.—Madame de Preulet proposed that he should accompany her on the violin, and, whilst they were forming a charming little concert, Madame de Preulet, who found I was unacquainted with her history, desired I would assist her into the next room, when she would, if agreeable to me, relate it.—I conducted her thither; the door was left open, that we might hear the music;

music ; but not so as to interrupt the narration, which she began as follows :

“ I am descended from a good family, who had more nobility than fortune to boast of.—Unlike the generality of parents, who, in disposing of their children in marriage, think only of the aggrandizement of their fortune ; mine thought only of making me happy.—Some highly advantageous offers were refused, and they gave my hand, where I own I had long given my heart.—I suppose a happier couple never existed than the Baron de Preulet and myself ; we were not rich, but we loved, and had a competency.”

The only thing wanting to complete our felicity was a child, and we had been married ten years without having one, when I lay in of Theresa.—Our joy was excessive ; but it was considerably

considerably damped by the loss I sustained at that time of both my parents, which a malignant fever carried off.—I gave them the tribute of a sincere grief.—My husband's tender attentions, and those I paid my dear little Theresa, insensibly dried my tears.—'Till now we had resided with my Father, but after his death we retired to a small house in the country; there, while the Baron employed himself in embellishing the garden and lands belonging to our cheerful habitation, my hours passed charmingly in opening my daughter's mind.—We saw little company; we sufficed to each other. — I thought of nothing; I wished for nothing beyond what I possessed.—Ah! days too short, why are ye gone? fled, alas! for ever!

Theresa was fourteen; her figure began to form, her countenance to develope itself, and the gay sprightliness

ness of youth animated her every gesture. — Her mind was like those trees which bear fruit when only flowers are expected. — The Baron had early sown in her heart the seeds of virtue and piety, and they had fallen in a happy soil. — The reading of the best poets, and of the most instructive historians, had adorned her mind, and given her an elegance of expression uncommon at her years. — We were surprised at the strength and excellence of her judgment, and delighted with the liveliness of her imagination. — While we were thus beginning to reap the effects of our tender care, the Baron, the dear Baron, was taken from us; forced to tear himself from our embraces to repair to the army! — How can I tell you what I suffered at his departure! how relate the agonies that followed!”

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The poor Lady stopped, the tears streamed down her pale cheeks, I sympathized with her in silence, and it was some time before she was sufficiently recovered to proceed.

“ You must guess, Mademoiselle,” continued she, “ what happened. — Alas ! I lost the most amiable of men ; a cannon shot stopped him in the career of glory, and left me the most wretched of widows ! — I will not attempt to describe what I suffered at the horrid news ! but fate had still fresh woes in store for me.

The Chevalier de Preulet, the poor Baron's brother, as he left no male heir, took possession of the small estate he had enjoyed, and seized upon all his personal fortune, under pretence of some flaw he said he had discovered in my marriage settlement.

This

This excess of cruelty roused me from the stupefaction into which grief had thrown me ; I hastened to Aix with my daughter, consulted my friends, and commenced a law suit against the Chevalier. — My lawyers gave me the most flattering encouragement, assured me I could not lose my cause ; it was at last brought to a decision, and given against me. — I could hardly believe the fatal news ; but, alas ! it was too true. — Determined not to submit to this iniquitous decree, I thought of appealing to another tribunal ; but my money was all spent, my friends deserted me, and I had no resources left.

To compleat my misery, the agitation of my mind flung me into a violent fever ; for several days I lay delirious. The first object I knew was poor Theresa, who, pale as death, was watching me with the most anxi-

ous care: "Ah! my beloved Mother," exclaimed she, "do you then know me? May the Almighty be praised!" — I stretched out my arms towards her; she embraced me, and we mingled our tears together. — I found she had never stirred from my bedside during my illness, had been my only nurse, and continued so, in spite of my commands for her to procure some other. — Night and day that dear child sat up with me, and assumed a cheerfulness to which her heart was a stranger.

Her youth, and the excellence of her constitution, supported her for some time; but at last she appeared quite worn out; and, just as I began to have strength to crawl about the room, she grew so ill as to be unable to quit her bed. — At this last bitter stroke I was forced to strengthen my mind, by remembering that we were

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in the hands of a good and gracious God, who would not inflict upon us more than he would enable us to bear ; yet there were moments when, considering our destitute condition, and the chain of evils which had befallen us, that I could scarcely forbear arraigning the justice of Providence. — I found myself totally incapacitated to repay Theresa the care she had shewn me.

The slightest exertion brought on a fainting fit, and I had the misery to see her suffer without being able to be of the least relief to her. — I fell into a kind of lethargy, from which I was drawn by the entrance of the mistress of the house, who desired I would immediately pay the rent due to her. — This demand sounded like a clap of thunder in my ears, for it was absolutely impossible for me to pay it.

The sale of our cloaths, and of a few trinkets we had saved from the wreck of our fortune, had scantily afforded us the necessaries of life; but my long illness had drained our purse, and at that moment we were totally destitute. — Two whole days had passed without my having tasted a morsel of food; my tears alone had moistened my lips: When Theresa, ignorant of the extremity to which we were reduced, said, in a low voice, so languid as scarcely to be articulate, “I am very faint, Mama; could not you get me a little drop of broth, I feel as if I were dying.” — The mistress of the house, who stood waiting for my answer to her demand of rent, heard the poor child’s petition without being in the least moved. — “I will pay you the moment I can procure the money,” said I; “but, for the love of the blessed Virgin, don’t let my daughter expire

expire for want; have the kindness to send her up a little broth." — She told me in answer, that she wondered at my assurance to ask any thing of her, when I refused to pay the two months lodging due to her. — My poor Theresa's situation made me stifle the indignation I felt at her brutality, and I followed her, as well as I could, down stairs, to try to obtain some relief for my child: I was going to fling myself on my knees to this obdurate woman, when her husband stopped me, and sharply reprimanding her for her inhumanity, desired she would give me some bread and broth, which she did with an ill grace; at the same time declaring, that if I did not pay her in two days time she would turn us both out into the street.

Theresa relished this little refreshment, which she made me partake of,

and, soon after taking it, she sunk into a profound sleep. — I followed her example, and found myself considerably stronger when I awoke. —

The next morning Theresa was much better: I left her to enjoy repose, and resolved to crawl out, and try once more the benevolence of my friends. — I went to a Lady whom I had long known, but she refused to see me; others excused themselves on frivolous pretences from assisting me; and, as I had not taken this measure without doing great violence to my pride, my disappointment aggravated my misery. — I wandered out of the town without any fixed project, in a state of mind bordering on phrenzy, when I found myself on the brink of a pond. — I stopped. — The idea of delivering myself from a life become absolutely insupportable rushed suddenly on my imagination; despair totally engrossed every faculty of my soul;

soul ; I forgot my daughter ; I forgot my duty to my Maker, and I cried out in bitterness of grief — “ I can bear no more ; my existence is intolerable, and death alone can finish my woes.” — Thus saying, I threw myself head-long into the water. — I lost all sense, and when I recovered it, I found myself surrounded by two or three people busily employed about me : — Amongst them I discovered an elderly Gentleman, an old acquaintance of my late husband’s.

“ Providence, Sir,” said I, “ has undoubtedly sent you to my relief ; you have prevented the execution of my criminal design, suggested by despair ; and it is in your power to save not only my life, but that of my daughter, who is in danger of perishing for want.” — The Count de Marnigon seemed affected at what I said. — “ I am very happy, Madam,” said

he, " that I have been the means of saving so valuable a life as yours. — The fineness of the morning tempted me to alight from my chaise, along with my friend Monsieur l'Abbé; we were at a little distance from you, when we were alarmed by your desperate action, and catching hold of your cloaths prevented you from sinking.—Let us conduct you home immediately, and consider what further service we can do you." — I acknowledged his goodness as it deserved, and rendered my thanks to the Abbé, who obligingly resigned to me his place in the Count's carriage. — I knew the latter was a man of large fortune, and that he lived at Marseilles. — On our way he asked me several questions concerning my daughter, which I answered with a Mother's partiality.—I gave him likewise a brief account of the situation of my affairs. — This conversation engrossed us till we

we reached my lodgings ; the Count conducted me to the door of my apartment, and bidding me farewell, he slipped a purse into my hand, desiring leave to be allowed next day, if Theresa was better, to wait upon me.—I was unable to express my gratitude for his kind assistance, and promised, I would receive him with pleasure:

I had the satisfaction to find Theresa better than I could have expected. — I concealed from her the mad action I had committed, and only told her that Providence had pitied our distress, and sent a friend of her Father's to our relief. — She shared my joy; and now I hastened to pay my landlady, and to procure some comfortable food, which greatly restored us both.—My next care was to give a decent appearance to our apartment, and to procure a change of cloaths,

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and other necessaries we stood in need of.

The day following our benefactor arrived; I presented Theresa to him, and he appeared charmed with her. — He entered into all the particulars of our situation, advised us to continue our law suit against the Chevalier, and offered to support us with his credit, and with the money necessary: In short, he made us several visits, and entirely won our esteem by his friendly, generous behaviour. — He invited us to his house at Marseilles, ; “an old man, Madam, like me,” said he, smiling, “may be indulged with yours and your daughter’s company. — Come then to me; I will be a brother to you, and a Father to Theresa.” — This offer was too advantageous to be refused: — “But, Mademoiselle,” said Madame de Preulet, “I feel I must defer the conclusion of my sad story

story till to-morrow, when, I hope, you will return." — It was high time to depart, so we took our leave.

CHAP. XIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE EPISODE.

"I Will not," continued Mrs. Bel-field, "break in upon Madame de Preulet's History, by relating the conversation that passed between Henry and myself, on our way home; but continue her narration as she gave it the day following."

"Monsieur de Marignon carried us in his coach to Marseilles, where he had a fine house.—He assigned us apartments in it, where we found wardrobes completely furnished, linen, and

every thing we could want.—He introduced us to his friends, and accompanied us to see the city, public places, &c.—In short, he made it the study of his life to please us. — Such extraordinary kindness could not fail of making a deep impression on our hearts; we would have sacrificed our lives to serve our benefactor.

The change in our circumstances, by tranquilizing our minds, entirely restored our health. — Mr. de Marnigon desired I would put all my papers into his lawyer's hands, that he might see what could be done to oblige the Chevalier de Preulet to do us justice. — Though the Count seemed partial to me, and always treated me with the greatest respect, it was easy to perceive the preference he gave to my daughter. — Had not his age rendered the supposition improbable, I should sometimes have thought his
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attentions to her were more like those of a lover than of a friend, who assumed the title of father. — I observed that he sought for opportunities to speak to her alone; these I never gave him. — Soon I found an alteration in his behaviour to me; his manner was cold and constrained; and the demonstrations of his regard for Theresa, such as I thought improper to allow. — I made very unpleasant reflections on the frailty of human nature; and regretted that the growing passion of the Count, would oblige us to quit an asylum, where we had been so hospitably received. — But as I could not immediately determine what measures to pursue, I contented myself, for the present, with letting the Count perceive, by my manner, that I had discovered his weakness, and that I discountenanced it. — Monsieur de Marignon's house was situated in the skirts of the city; his garden
opened

opened on the sea shore; and often, in the cool of the evening, we indulged ourselves with walking there; but we were always well-accompanied, as we were liable to meet sea faring people of all nations, not very respectful in their behaviour to women.

One evening, after an excessive hot day, which rendered the sea breezes particularly refreshing, we repaired, about sun set, to our favorite walk. — Monsieur de Marignon was in a particular good humour; entertained us with several pleasant anecdotes, and the time insensibly passed; but as I perceived night coming on, I hinted a wish to go home. — The Count did not attend to this; he desired Theresa to sing—she complied; and I grew more impatient than before to return. — He consented, and we were turning homewards, when four ill-looking fellows jumped out
of

of a small boat, which stood at anchor, and rushing upon me, seized me in their arms. — Terrified beyond imagination, I found myself unable to cry out for help—a handkerchief was thrust into my mouth, and my hands tied. — In this condition I was carried to the boat; a smothered cry reached my ears as they were forcing me into it, which I imagined proceeded from poor Therefa.

My senses were so bewildered, that I was incapable of reflection; but as soon as I began a little to recover from the horror and surprize this outrage had occasioned, I considered that the Count must have been privy to it. — I recollected, that neither himself nor servants had attempted to rescue me from the villains; and that, as well as the duskiness of the evening would permit, I had during my struggle with my ravishers, perceived Monsieur de

de Marignon dragging Theresa away. — My apprehensions for her were still more intolerable than my own sufferings. — I was fastened by a rope to the seat; and immediately after the boat put out to sea. — Conceive what my feelings must have been at that instant! — The wretches who carried me off talked among themselves a language I did not understand, only sometimes I distinguished a word of broken French.

This terrible moment, when I found myself thus betrayed by him I had been accustomed to respect, and every instant removed further from the shore, where my darling, my beloved child, remained, exposed to the machinations of a villain: — This moment, I say, was far more agonizing than (unfortunate as my life had been) any I had hitherto experienced! — What was to become of me I could not divine! —

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We were now in full sea; the ruffians no longer plied their oars as vigorously as at first, and producing a cask of liquor, they emptied it between them: Soon after three of them fell asleep, while one remained at the rudder.

The moon now arose and enabled me to distinguish the city. — What mournful looks I cast towards it! — One paddling oar, alone, kept time with my sighs and inward groans; the ruffians snored, all else was horribly still.

The fellow who watched seemed attentively to observe me; I cast on him a piteous supplicating look, but he averted his eyes: Again, however, I caught them fixed upon me, and endeavoured to awaken in his heart some feelings of compassion, by raising my hands, tied as they were together, towards him. — His countenance

nance expressed irresolution — At last he arose; advanced a pace towards me; and then he resumed his seat. — My tears now redoubled; again he left the rudder; and approaching me, unbound my hands. — The first use I made of them was to give him my watch; and then, clasping them round his knees, I pointed to the shore, making signs to him to ungag me. — This he did, but shook his head, as I still looked wishfully towards the city. — I then produced my purse, and offering it him, with many interceding signs, which he perfectly understood, at last obtained my wish. — He took the purse; and, gracious God! what was my joy when I saw him make for the shore! — My only apprehension, now, was lest his companions should awake, and defeat his purpose; but inebriety secured them fast in sleep. — The wind was favorable as well as the tide, so that we got back very expeditiously;

ditionally; he then, with great precaution, not to disturb the others, lifted me out of the boat, and leaving me upon the shore, put out again to sea.

My first care was to offer up my thanks to God for this joyful deliverance; yet my situation was still shocking: Alone upon the shore; in the dead of night; ignorant where to shelter myself; and unprovided with the means of obtaining relief; I knew not what to do.—However, I walked as fast as my strength would permit 'till I came to a row of houses in the suburbs of Marseilles; I do not know whether I should have had courage to have rung at any door at so undue an hour, had not a light I perceived at a window encouraged me; as soon as I had rung the door was instantly opened by an elderly woman; but my disordered strange appearance undoubtedly

undoubtedly prejudiced her against me, for she was hastily going to re-shut it, when catching hold of her arm, I conjured her to hear me, and not expose me to the horror of passing the night in the street. — Though she still prevented my entrance, I saw she hesitated, and I pressed her with redoubled vehemence. — I suppose her heart was naturally compassionate, for she laid aside her caution, and said, “Possibly you may deceive me, but I cannot refuse your request;” and taking me by the hand she led me into the house. — I would immediately have informed her of the horrible story that had occasioned me to be a wanderer at such a strange hour, but I had not strength; it was as much as I could do to follow her into a chamber, in which was a neat bed. — The good woman seeing me ready to faint assisted me to lie down, and went to fetch something to restore

store me. — While she was gone I gave way to the grief that oppressed me, and thought I heard, in an adjoining chamber, groan for groan, and sob for sob, echoed to mine. — I listened, and was convinced, that somebody was there, who seemed not less wretched than myself. — I enquired anxiously of my kind Hostess, as soon as she returned, who the person was that seemed in such distress. — “I know not,” answered she; “a young Englishman lodges here; yesterday he and his servant rode out in the cool of the evening, and just after it was dark, they returned, bringing with them a very handsome young lady, whom the young gentleman told me he had been so fortunate to deliver from a ruffian, and recommending her warmly to my care, he hastened away to hide himself in a convent for fear of being taken; for I understand he

He wounded the base villain who was carrying off the young lady."

I had listened so eagerly, as scarcely to draw my breath, to this account.—
"Good God! can it be?" cried I, with a wildness that startled the poor woman; "it certainly is Theresa," and forgetting my weakness, I jumped off the bed, and flew into the next room.—"It is her! it is her!" cried I, and we fell into each other's arms.—Our tears, broken ejaculations, and questions that quick followed each other, without waiting for answers, affected our kind friend; she made us sit down, and would not allow us to speak till we had drank a glass of wine; then, when we were somewhat composed, Theresa confirmed her narration, and added, that as soon as the treacherous Count's associates had seized upon me, she had caught hold of him to protect her, when, to her
great

great astonishment, he clasped her in his arms, and told her he would kill her if she screamed, and that he attempted rudely to stop her mouth:— That she struggled violently to loose herself from his hold, and that, finding he could not alone drag her along the shore, he had called one of his servants to his assistance.—“ Submit quietly,” said he, “and no harm shall happen to you; nor be uneasy about your Mother, I have sent her away, but she will be taken care of: Nothing less than her absence could secure the happiness I hope to enjoy.” —Theresa, in spite of the Count’s endeavours, wrested one hand from his grasp, and, tearing out the handkerchief he had crammed into her mouth, made the shore resound with her screams.—At that instant a Gentleman on horseback approached, and, alighting from his horse, sternly demanded why that young person was thus

thus treated?—Monsieur de Marignon made some haughty reply, and quitting Theresa, drew his sword.—The Gentleman then said, “You appear, as far as I can discern by this faint light, an old man, consequently unequal to such a combatant as myself.—I conclude you are the Lady’s Father; but, surely, even that character does not allow of such violence.”—“Oh! no, no,” cried Theresa, “he is not my Father; save me! save me, for the love of God!—The Gentleman then drew his sword, and the Count rushing furiously upon him, was run through the body. — In this short interval the villain, his associate, had attempted to carry off Theresa; but the Gentleman’s servant perceiving his intention, knocked him down, and his comrade, who was at a little distance, took to his heels, so that the English Gentleman remained master of the field of battle. — Theresa attempted

tempted to throw herself at the feet of her deliverer, who kindly soothed her flurried spirits, and placing her on the horse before him, hastened to convey her to his lodgings. — His servant was ordered to send a surgeon to the Count's assistance, and then to join his master. — Theresa, in the warmest terms, extolled the Englishman's behaviour, who, after he had left her to the good woman's care, departed. — We again blessed God for our reunion, and then consented to take the repose we stood in need of. — The next morning we had just risen, when the mistress of the house entered, and informed us a friar wished to speak to us. — We admitted him, and Theresa immediately discovered that it was the English Gentleman who had done her so essential a service. — After rendering him the acknowledgements he deserved, we thought it right to trust him with our

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sad story; I shall never forget the tender interest he took in our misfortunes, nor the pains he took to console us. — Thus, Mademoiselle, we became acquainted with your amiable brother, and from that period he has been our only friend. — He told us that from what he had learned, he had reason to think the Count's life in danger, and that a felucca being on the point of departing for Genoa, he thought it expedient to seize so favourable an opportunity of escaping. — The pleasure we had in conversing with him, though great, did not make us forget what was due to his safety, we therefore urged him to depart, and at last, after entreating us to continue in his lodgings, and recommending us strongly to the care of his landlady (Madame Boisson) he bid us farewell.

We could not for some time talk of any thing else than the generous
Chevalier

Chevalier St. Clairfont; but, alas! we were obliged to turn our thoughts from so pleasing a theme to our own sad situation. — Destitute of friends and money, in a strange city, exposed, perhaps, to Monsieur de Marignon's violence, should he recover, no ray of hope seemed to cheer us. — There she first recovered that energy of mind, so necessary to struggle with affliction.

“ Since,” said she, “ we have escaped from the treacherous Count in a manner we could not have hoped, we may reasonably suppose Providence will never desert us. — Our health is restored; let me then, my dear Mother, endeavour to procure our subsistence by my needle. — The talents I formerly cultivated for my amusement may now be of real use to us. — Madame Boisson allows us to continue here; she is good and friendly; for

the present her house will be a secure asylum."

We informed Madame Boisson of our intention, and desired her to find us employment. She endeavoured to dissuade us from what she thought derogatory to our rank (for we had told her who we were). "You are richer," said she, "than you imagine; the English Gentleman has left sufficient money to defray your expences 'till his return; and I should not have mentioned this as he forbid me; but I cannot continue silent when I find you are thus going to debase yourselves."—"No, Madam," cried Theresa, with a generous warmth, "industry can never lower any one. — God forbid we should take an improper advantage of this young man's generosity; we will ourselves, or rather I will, endeavour to procure a subsistence for my Mother and self; therefore

therefore keep untouched the Chevalier's bounty, and at his return restore it him."

I was pleased with the propriety of my daughter's sentiments, and Madame Boisson reluctantly acquiesced. — By our desire she made secret enquiries concerning Monsieur de Marnigon, and in a few days we heard that he was rather better, though not yet pronounced out of danger.

Theresa, having procured all the necessary implements for embroidery, was indefatigable at her needle: I assisted her as well as I could, and whatever we finished we gave to Madame Boisson to dispose of. — She managed matters so well, that we were astonished at the sums of money our work fetched. — Very soon we were able to furnish ourselves with all the necessaries we wanted, and even some

of the superfluities of life : But that we might not again by any casualty be exposed to the distress we had formerly experienced, we allowed ourselves little relaxation.

We heard that the Count was recovered ; that he pretended he had been wounded by some villains, who had carried off his dear friends Madame de Preulet and her daughter ; that he had done all in his power, with the assistance of his servants, to protect them ; and that he had nearly lost his life in their defence. — This story was universally believed, and the villain, who deserved to be execrated, was pitied. — He made the most diligent enquiries after us ; probably the wretches he had bribed to carry me off informed him of their ill success, but this is only conjecture.

As

As we trembled, lest he should discover our retreat, we determined never to stir from our apartment 'till we had sufficient money to enable us to move to some other city. — The Chevalier St. Clairfont returned from Italy, and we received him with excessive joy. — I told him of our landlady's kindness, and that I was not ignorant of his benevolent design. — He seemed hurt that I had not profited by it, and hastily dropped the subject. — Madame Boisson, as soon as he had left us, came into the room, and presenting me with a purse, entreated I would excuse an innocent deceit she had used. —

"This," continued she, "is what your work really produced; what you have hitherto received has been remitted you by the Chevalier, and you will mortify him very much if you insist upon repaying him." — The Chevalier soon made us another visit, and his behaviour was so delicate,

that I consented to keep the purse.— I had now made the little preparations necessary for our removal, which I saw greatly chagrined our noble friend.— He called on me one evening, and desired to speak with me alone: “ You are going, my dear Madam,” said he, “ and possibly you may again experience some cruel vicissitude of fortune, unprotected as you are. — Your daughter’s beauty, her many amiable qualities, will expose her to dangers that I shudder to think of. — It is but a very scanty pittance that you can hope to obtain by yours and Theresa’s industry; and from what I have heard of your law-suit, there is much reason to apprehend that you will not gain it. — Such then being your situation, will you allow me to propose a plan, which, if it meets with your approbation, will make me extremely happy.

About

About a league from Montpellier, where I usually reside, a friend of mine has a small estate; I have sometimes been with him to see it, and was struck with its agreeable situation.

—If you would accept of a retreat, there I can venture to promise you one, not indeed equal to your rank, but where you will enjoy peace and security: And to remove all your scruples, I will candidly confess I am much interested in your compliance.

—I dare own that I love, that I adore your Theresa; I have never hinted this to her as I wished first to gain your approbation, and to communicate to you the particulars of my situation and prospects in life.”——

Your brother then, Mademoiselle, gave me a full account of himself and family, and acknowledged he had no hopes of obtaining his parent’s consent. — This indeed, in my distressed situation, could scarcely be expected.

—But my principles would not permit me to be the means of drawing a young man from the duty he owed his parents; nor could I suffer my daughter to enter into any family clandestinely. — The difference of religion was no objection to me, for do we not all adore the same God? — I therefore declined accepting his kind offer; assuring him at the same time, that were I in happier circumstances I would prefer him to the greatest duke in France for my son-in-law. — The Chevalier still pressed me to come here, and still I refused. — My declining health, however, obliged me to give his proposal some consideration; I found nothing but country air would restore my health, though it grieved me more than I can express to be a burthen to him; I consented to come here, upon condition that he would only visit us occasionally, as a friend, and allow Theresa

refusa to continue her laudable endeavours towards our support. — He accepted these terms unwillingly. — In short, not to trespass longer upon your patience, here we came, and ever since our arrival he has behaved with a degree of prudence and delicacy that fills me with admiration. — We both idolize him; and we should be the most ungrateful of beings if we did not. — He has introduced to us his friend the Count Louis de Salenciere, who seems nearly as amiable as himself.

But, Mademoiselle, amidst the peace and comfort I here enjoy; a secret languor preys upon me; I know, notwithstanding the physicians flattering assurances, that my end approaches. — In regard to myself, this I own is a consoling thought; but my daughter, Mademoiselle; Ah! — — — Her orphan state fills me with the

most cruel apprehensions. — I have not disguised from St. Clairfont my sad presentiment; and though he tried to conceal his feelings, and to persuade me, he did not think I was in danger, I read his thoughts. — To secure Theresa a friend of her own sex, I eagerly accepted St. Clairfont's proposal of bringing you here; I need not add, Mademoiselle, the pleasure I have felt in your society!

The Countess Louis de Salenciere is, I am told, able, powerfully to protect my daughter; but your brother, for what reasons I know not, warmly opposes our making any acquaintance with her. — As reason guides all his actions, I never pretend to question the propriety of them. — It is my wish to place Theresa in a convent, as the only proper asylum for her, after my decease. — Perhaps, Mademoiselle, you would sometimes visit

visit her; the kindness of St. Clairfont's sister would be balm to her heart."

Madame de Preuler ceased, quite exhausted by this long narration.— I assured her, with great warmth, that she might consider me as her sincere friend; that I was infinitely obliged to my brother for procuring me the honor of her's, and Mademoiselle de Preuler's acquaintance, and endeavoured to banish from her mind those gloomy ideas which I hoped solitude alone had occasioned.— She shook her head, and faintly smiling, said, "I wish, for the sake of Theresa, that my life may be prolonged; but Mademoiselle, I believe that dear girl will shortly stand in need of your friendly consolation."

My brother and Theresa now joined us, and the conversation became general;

general; soon after we took our leave.

On our way home I ventured to ask Henry how he contrived to support this amiable family. — He owned to me that he denied himself everything but what was absolutely necessary, that he might have the luxury of assisting them; but that with all possible economy he had not been able to avoid contracting debts. — And surely my dear Marcia, if that is ever excusable, it was in the present case. — He told me, that he often refused himself the pleasure of going to the cottage, lest the frequent appearance of a young man in the village might excite suspicions injurious to Theresa; but that at a distance he generally contrived to have a peep every day, at her habitation.

But

But my dear Marcia, you look pale; let us go and take a turn on the South Parade, and to-morrow I will conclude my Narration."

Marcia acquiesced. — The idea of Theresa was never absent from her thoughts one moment; and she felt more unhappy than usual.

C H A P. XIV.

CONTINUATION OF THE EPISODE.

"I am all impatience," said Marcia to Mrs. Belfield, when they met the next morning, "to hear the conclusion of your Narrative; but pray tell me whether it was Theresa's picture you shewed me the other day."

"It was," replied Mrs. Belfield; —
"but she was far handsomer than that
repre-

represents her." — "What terrible distresses poor Madame de Preulet went through!" said Marcia

"Her fate, indeed, was cruel," said Mrs. Belfield. — "On our return home that day she finished her History, we found Louis de Salenciere waiting for Henry. — They went out together to consider how they should dispose of Theresa, in case of her mother's death: Louis undertook to place her in a convent as a relation of his own.

Poor Madame de Preulet's presentiment of her approaching dissolution was but too well founded. — An indisposition prevented my accompanying my brother in his ride the next day — he went alone: Josephine, the maid, ran out at his approach, and wringing her hands, said her lady was speechless, and, seemingly, in the agonies

agonies of death. — Henry, much alarmed, hastened to her apartment; at first she did not know him; but all at once her countenance animated; she fixed her eyes on him benignantly, and stretching out her hand, he gave her his; she grasped it eagerly, and taking Theresa's, who was weeping over her, she pressed them together, and raising her eyes towards heaven, she seemed to implore a blessing on both; then fetched a deep sigh and expired.

Theresa, inconsolable, was carried fainting out of the room; and you will easily imagine that my brother shewed her every attention, and did not quit her 'till the first violence of her grief was over. — The same evening Louis de Salenciere conducted her into a convent, where he had prepared the abbess to receive her.

Some-

Sometimes I contrived to call upon her; but not often, for fear my mother should discover where I went. — Though in many respects a good woman, she would highly have disapproved of this connection on my brother's account; she flattered herself that he would, by an advantageous match, restore his family to their former situation, and accustomed to the strictest oeconomy, she had entirely forgot every generous idea. — My brother knew he could still less hope to interest my father in Theresa's favor. — Tendernefs formed no part of his character; and I am sorry to say, his own gratification throughout life, regulated his conduct. — Love he laughed at as the romance of young minds; and his thoughts now, as well as my mother's, were turned to that period when Henry would be of age, and enable him to cut off the entail of his estate. — Madame de Preu-

let

let had now been dead four months, and my father was preparing to return with his family to England, as in a fortnight my brother would be of age.—I cannot describe Henry's grief at the thoughts of quitting Theresa.—“She must be mine,” said he; “I cannot live without her; we must keep our marriage secret 'till better days arrive; but mine she must be.”

Henry found it very difficult to persuade Theresa to consent to marry him; she urged all the objections her mother had made; and the idea of a clandestine marriage shocked her delicacy. — In France they are much more rigid in their ideas of secret marriages than we are in England; and it was a long while before he could obtain her consent.—However, when she found he was to leave Montpellier in two days, her tenderness out-weighed all other considerations;

Louis

Louis de Salenciere undertook to settle the whole business; he provided a priest, and fetched her from the convent the day before we left Montpellier.

The ceremony was performed with the greatest privacy; Louis de Salenciere gave Theresa away; she was attended by the faithful Josephine and myself. — My brother accompanied me back to my father's house to avoid suspicion, and after passing half an hour in conversation with his family, he told them, that as he was so shortly to attend them to England, he had promised his friend Louis to pass the remainder of the day with him in the country. — No opposition was made, and he instantly departed." — "I am sorry to interrupt you," cried Marcia, rising, and turning towards the window; "but I find the room close. — I will breathe a little fresh air and attend

attend you presently."—Mrs. Belfield continued silent for some minutes, and then by Marcia's desire resumed her Narration.

"Theresa and Josephine had been committed, at the church door, to Louis's care, who had seen them safe in Theresa's former habitation, which had been uninhabited since Madame de Preulet's death; Josephine having boarded in the village. — Theresa was greatly affected at seeing a place where she had lost the best of mothers; but she suppressed her grief not to damp Henry's joy. — To be possessed of his beloved Theresa was happiness indeed; yet it was allayed by the unpleasant reflection, that he must shortly tear himself from her, and leave her in narrow circumstances. — His only comfort was, that he should not leave her unprotected, to Louis de Sa-lenciere's honor and friendship he entrusted

entrusted her, and such was his reliance on him, that he would not have thought her safer under the care of a legion of angels.

You can figure to yourself better than I can describe, the parting scene between my brother and his lovely bride.—Twice he left the room and again he returned to take one more farewell. — Louis de Salenciere, who was come to fetch him in his carriage, at last took him by the arm and forcibly led him away; he would, however, stop one instant at the door; “Adieu! my beloved,” he cried; “Adieu! do not afflict yourself too much at my absence; remember I shall ever be present with you in thought.—My friend will often visit you, and bring you my letters; he knows every sentiment of my heart; to him you must apply on every emergency; and from him you may expect every help and comfort

comfort in his power to bestow. —

Ah! Theresa; my life! my soul! must I leave you! Almighty God! protect my wife! dear Josephine, take care of your beloved mistress!"

—In finishing these words he withdrew, and flung himself, choaked with grief, into the carriage, where his friend followed, and conducted him home; nor did he leave him 'till we set out on our journey; it was a dismal one for poor Henry: My parents observed his melancholy; and my father rallied him on it, saying he was sighing, he supposed, for some mistress he had left behind: "You may get plenty in England to console you," said he; "but you must make up to some city miss, and get a plumb if you can." — Henry made no answer, and endeavoured to appear chearful. —

I shall spare you the history of our journey, and every thing else that is not material; I shall only say, that I

was

was delighted with England, whence I had been so long absent that every object wore, in my eyes, the appearance of novelty.

My father and brother were engaged all day with lawyers.—The latter considered whether before he cut off the entail he ought not to stipulate for some provision for Theresa, and acquaint his Father with all that had passed; but should he be enraged, and not allow of the validity of the marriage as contracted with a minor, and performed by a priest of the Roman Catholic faith, he might persecute Theresa, and terrify her so, as to render her situation truly deplorable:—He therefore judged it prudent to conceal his marriage, and wait till Theresa was of age; and that he could bring her to England, when he determined every measure should be taken to render their union legal:

—But

—But to secure her a part of the fortune that was to be re-settled on him, unknown to his Father.

The entail was cut off.—Meetings were held with the creditors to try to compromise my Father's debts. — They were obstinate, and little disposed to come into reasonable terms, and these perplexing affairs threatened to take a considerable time to adjust. — My Father too was provoked at my brother's having contracted debts; though he had always allowed him a very scanty maintenance, yet Henry readily concurred with him in every plan proposed for his accommodation; however prejudicial it might be to his future situation in life.—Had he been less dutiful, he would now have been rich; but filial tenderness in his breast had always more weight with him than any selfish motives: Nor would he ever listen to any representations

of his friends upon this subject.——

“ All you can urge,” said he, “ is in vain ; my Father surely has a right to expect from me every assistance in my power to grant. — A certain portion of the estate must be settled upon me ; and do you think I shall ever repine that my income is lessened, when I consider that I have procured my parents ease, and released them from their persecuting creditors ?”

“ But suppose,” said one more earnest than the rest, “ that your Father requites you ill for this generosity ?”

—“ Then I shall console myself,” replied he, “ that I did my duty ; and with youth, health, and a profession, I shall shift for myself.” — Fine romantic stuff, indeed !” said Mr. Stable, the lawyer : “ Young man, young man, you will repent your rashness.”

— My brother made him no answer, and hastened to drop the conversation ;

but

but afterwards he entrusted him with his desire of making a settlement on Theresa, without telling him she was his wife; and this was accordingly done unknown to my Father.

My brother's dejection seemed daily to encrease; nothing amused him; he returned disgusted and weary from public places, avoided all society, and frequently passed whole evenings shut up in his own apartment.—My Father was displeased; he attributed his melancholy to the arrangement relative to money matters, that he had prevailed on Henry to make.—My Mother appeared more alarmed than I had ever seen her before, attempted to discover the cause; but he was not in the habit of speaking confidentially to her, and her enquiries remained unanswered.—Even my little attentions seemed disregarded; sometimes

he would press my hand tenderly, sigh, and hasten from me.

His absence from Theresa was certainly very painful to him; but still I could not think *that* alone oppressed his mind — I knew he heard constantly from France, so that I was totally at a loss to account for this increased dejection. — I did not dare to enquire, as I saw he avoided all particular conversation.

At last, one day, he came into my room, pale as death, and throwing himself on a chair, “Oh! my God! Harriet,” cried he, “I can stay here no longer. — The lawyers will terminate nothing; I have done my part of the business, and go I must immediately, for my mind is on the rack.” — “What has happened,” said I, “to agitate you thus? Is Theresa ill?” — “No; then I should be quite distracted;

stracted; she is well," continued he, writes to me constantly; but - - - -."

— "Then really you are to blame,"

said I; "united to her by indissoluble bands, surely a few months separation,

on so necessary an occasion, ought to be borne with more fortitude."—"I

am to blame," replied he; "yet hear me, and I will disclose to you the uneasiness that consumes me. —

The first weeks we passed in London, I received letters every mail from my

Theresa and Louis de Salenciere: They were warm, tender, just such as

my heart required. — The former continues to write punctually, and in the

same style; but she seems more unhappy than ever. — The latter grows

less regular; sometimes he says he is ill, and two mails pass without my

hearing from him; then business, or a journey into the country, prevents

his writing. — Louis de Salenciere not to find a moment to write to his friend!

— In

—In short, he finds a variety of excuses for his silence, none satisfactory.

—His letters too are in a constrained style, broken sentences, frequent repetitions, scarcely any mention made of Theresa. — What am I to think of this?

Theresa speaks of him in all her letters as the best of friends; dwells upon his attentions, and says he alone prevents her spirits being quite subdued by the pangs of absence. — Louis de Salenciere is noble, generous, full of honour; but yet - - - - -

“Stop,” cried I, “take care, Henry, do not wrong your friend; a baneful passion has crept into your heart, tear it out before it takes root” — “I perceive,” said he, “you read my thoughts; I am ashamed of them myself; — yet consider that Louis has strong passions; that Theresa is charming; and, though I am sure he is
incapable

incapable of a thought of injuring me, who can say that, having frequent opportunities of seeing so lovely a creature, of doing her a thousand little services, he may be able to see her with indifference? — And if he does love her, he must love her to distraction. — This, perhaps, occasions violent struggles in his own breast, with those sentiments of honour and friendship inherent there, and causes him to send me these strange incoherent letters.”

To say truth, my dear Marcia, I began to suspect my brother's conjectures might not be without some foundation; but I dissembled, and endeavoured to quiet his jealous apprehensions, but I did not succeed. — “I have still further cause for alarm,” said he, after a short silence; “I have received several anonymous letters to tell me I am betrayed by those

I most love : The author I cannot divine ; nor should I pay much attention to the contents, well knowing the malice of the world, if Louis de Salenciere himself had not by his change of style given some colour to this information ; yet at times I hate myself for harbouring such a thought of my friend ; in short, my mind is torn by contending passions, and nothing can calm its tumult but an immediate interview with him. — He can, and he will, I hope, clear up this matter : This night, therefore, I have resolved to depart.—Make some excuse for me to my parents ; tell them I will return in about a fortnight, and keep my secret faithfully : So saying, he embraced me affectionately, and flung out of the room.

The next morning, when he was missed, the house was all in confusion ; my Father swore ; my Mother
shed

shed tears. — Every enquiry was made after him ; but he had taken his measures so well he could not be traced.

I must now tell you what had passed in France after our departure. — Theresa shut up in her retreat with her faithful Josephine, spent her days and nights in lamenting her husband's absence. — He was the constant subject of their conversation. — St. Clairfont had said he would return in six months ; a faithful account was kept of the hours, even of the minutes that intervened. — Louis de Salenciere was Theresa's only visitor ; he was always received with pleasure, as Henry's dearest friend ; besides, it was through him she had an opportunity of hearing from, and conveying letters to her husband. — As soon as any mail arrived from England, he had the attention to wait on her immediately ; he did all he could to amuse her, and

she discovered daily so many amiable qualities in him, that next to Henry she esteemed him.

Several weeks had thus passed, when she observed that he made his visits unusually short, and that he seemed extremely out of spirits: As she had heard from my brother an unamiable character of Pauline, she apprehended some domestic chagrin disturbed him; and though she forbore from discretion to enquire what it was, she tried to return the kindness he had shewn her, and exerted herself to sooth his grief. — Her endeavours were not unsuccessful; for a time he would appear chearful, entreat her to play upon the harp, and listen with delight while she sung. — Then all at once, without assigning any cause, he would rush out of the room, and not come near her for several days. — Sometimes there was an
 alarming

alarming wildness in his eyes; often he seemed insensible when she was speaking, and then he would recover, as if just awoken from a deep sleep, and apologize to her for his absence of mind.

This extraordinary change which Theresa could not account for, gave her great uneasiness: She communicated it to Josephine, who gave it as her opinion, that Count Louis's behaviour indicated approaching madness. — This suggestion seemed too probable to Theresa, and she resolved for the future never to see him one instant alone; but as it would be cruel to alarm Henry with a suspicion, that after all might not be well founded, she never let it transpire in any of her letters.

Such was the situation of things when Henry, who had travelled day
 F 6 and.

and night, arrived in France. — He determined immediately to see his friend, even before he went to Theresa.

He had on his route reasoned himself out of his jealousy, and he returned to Montpellier *almost* persuaded that Louis de Salenciere would explain to his satisfaction the circumstances that had alarmed him. — He got to Montpellier early in the evening, and immediately went to the Count's Hôtel; but was disappointed at hearing that he was from home, and not expected to return till supper time: He was just going from the door when the Countess Louis descended; her carriage was waiting at the gate: She seemed surprised to see him, and with more cordiality than usual, asked him to enter into the house; but he was ill disposed for trifling visits, and, as he could not see

see Louis, resolved instantly to fly to Theresa, forgetting his former determination. — Pauline, mortified at his refusal, said she would not detain him, though she had rejoiced that chance had so unexpectedly brought him to her house, as she had an affair of the utmost consequence to communicate to him. — Again his imagination was tinged with jealousy :— He stood pensive, and Pauline urged him more earnestly than before not to deny her so small a favour. — Upon condition, therefore, that she would explain her business briefly, he followed her to her apartment. — She seemed disordered, and the tears stood in her eyes.

“ There was a time,” said she, “ when I thought my heart was not destined to Louis de Salenciere; I was indifferent to him when I married; perhaps this may not surprize you.

you. — But since I was doomed to be his wife, I resolved to recall my wandering affections, and fix them where they were due. — Louis's amiable disposition rendered this no difficult task; I soon grew attached to him, and had only to lament the little progress I made in his heart; it was easy to perceive, though he treated me with respect and kindness, that, had not his parents controuled his choice, it never would have fallen upon me. — I flattered myself, my unwearied attention to please him would, on a disposition naturally generous, operate in my favor; and I saw, with pleasure, from his domestic turn, that he had no attachment elsewhere. — Within these few weeks an alarming change has appeared in his disposition; he is scarcely ever at home; avoids me sedulously; is peevish when he is spoken to; often will give no answer, and perpetually misapprehends what I say.

say.—His looks are absolutely terrifying; he appears, at times, quite distracted: More than once in the night he has broken my rest by dismal groans; occasionally he talks in his sleep, in an incoherent manner; but last night he caught hold of me suddenly, and I distinctly heard him utter, “Ah! Theresa; lovely Theresa;” and then he burst into a flood of tears.

What am I to infer from this?—You, St. Clairfont, probably know the secrets of his heart; has some fatal passion got possession of it; or is all this the effects of a distempered brain?—Either of these evils would be very cruel to me; but the last, as perhaps incurable, the most so.—Tell me then, I conjure you, is there such a person as Theresa?—What is she?—Where does she reside?—And

be persuaded you may safely trust me."

Henry, who had sat motionless the whole time she had been speaking; now started up, and clapping his hands to his forehead, without speaking a word, rushed out of the room, scarcely knowing what he did, he threw himself into a *voiture de remise*, and ordered the coachman to drive to the village where Theresa lived. — His mind was in a situation, he has since told me, little less than distracted. — Bad as was his opinion of Pauline, there appeared too much plausibility in her account of her husband for him to discredit it; his own letters denoted the derangement of his mind, and the cause appeared but too obvious.

Just as Henry reached the village he met Pierre, Theresa's gardener. — He got out the carriage and enquired,
with

with as much composure as he could assume, after her. — He learned that she was well, and (as Pierre believed) walking, at that moment, in the garden with Count Louis de Salenciere.

Henry asked no more questions, but ordering the coachman to wait for him, he hastened to that house which he had never before entered without sensations of delight. — As he advanced he recollected the garden hedge was so low he could easily see over it, therefore, instead of going towards the house, he turned another way, and making a little circuit, glided along the hedge.

Theresa and Louis were advancing towards a seat, shaded with honeysuckles, close to the place of his concealment. — They were, seemingly, earnest in conversation; she looked
pale

pale and agitated ; but Louis's figure was entirely changed ; he seemed scarcely able to support himself, and his eyes, though sunk in his head, had a wild fire in their looks, quite unusual.

Henry scarcely breathed, that he might catch every sound they uttered ; they had placed themselves on the seat, and Louis exclaimed sorrowfully, " It must be ;—nothing else can restore me to myself.—Oh ! my brain ! I can no longer command the impetuous passion that harrows up my soul.—Ah ! lovely Theresa ! once more tell me you pity me," continued he, throwing himself on his knees ; " Oh ! my God, support me in this trying moment !"

Theresa wept bitterly. — " Remember your promise, Count," said she, sobbing ; " God knows I pity you."

you."—Then presenting her hand, he covered it with kisses; she had resigned it to him, did not attempt to withdraw it, and with her other hand supported her head.—A deep groan uttered by Henry, with the words, "Oh! Theresa!" roused both her and Louis; and they fell senseless on the ground.—Henry hardly knowing what he did, quitted his concealment, and hurried to his carriage.—The coachman asked him where he was to go; but he was incapable of speech.—The man therefore carried him back to Montpellier.—By degrees he began to recover from his stupor; his friend and his wife's perfidy appeared too clear; and he was almost tempted to put an end to his existence: The furious galloping of a horseman that passed by, made him look to see whether it was Louis, and he saw it was him: So he immediately resolved to follow him home.

He

He arrived at the Count's Hôtel, and flew to his apartment, whom he found pacing it with a frantic air; his hair all in disorder, and his teeth chattering together.

As soon as he saw my brother, he shrunk back, and hid his face with his hands; but presently recovering, he advanced towards him with a quick step. — “So you are come at last,” said he. “Strange doings in your absence—every thing is wrong—the world is in a blaze—and I — — — where am I — in hell? — — Are you Henry St. Clairfont? — That is not my friend's face: you are some impostor; but what am I? I am a villain!”

This strange language prevented my brother's giving way to the rage which filled his breast. — “Recollect yourself,” said he, “Count Louis,
and

and prepare to give me the satisfaction I require." "Satisfaction! satisfaction!" said Count Louis; "aye to be sure; it is very reasonable.—Here," said he, opening his waistcoat, "strike; have you a sword ready, or shall I lend you mine? — Yet stop; shall not Theresa be present? She may like to dip a handkerchief in my blood; yet she is not cruel. — — — Oh! no; she is not cruel; she gave me her lovely hand to kiss: Oh! that I had died upon it."

He then flung himself on a couch, and leaning upon his face, kept an obstinate silence. — Henry rung for somebody to attend him; convinced that he was entirely out of his mind.

He now wished he had not left Theresa's habitation so precipitately; would instantly have returned thither, but

but his excessive lassitude, both of mind and body, rendered this impossible.

CHAP. XV.

THE EPISODE CONCLUDED.

MRS. BELFIELD had more than once been forced to pause; she was herself affected by what she related, and her auditors could still less command the agitation of her mind.

“Poor Henry, on quitting the Count’s Hôtel,” said Mrs. Belfield, “entered the first inn he could find, and there he was taken so extremely ill, as soon to be insensible to every thing. — Fourteen days he lay delirious in a violent fever. — Fortunately he

he fell into humane hands, and the greatest care was taken of him. — I forgot to tell you he had no servant with him; he had just taken a new one before he left England, and did not care to put him into his confidence, so that, 'till he could give an account of himself, the people of the inn knew not his name; but they had searched his pockets, to see what money he had, and found sufficient to defray the expences he occasioned in their house.

As soon as my brother could recollect where he was, and what had happened, he immediately sent for a person, who had formerly been his servant, and whom he knew he could trust. — This man, whose name was Du Val, he sent to Theresa's house, to inform her of his situation, and to beg she would come to him immediately. — Du Val soon returned, bringing

bringing with him Josephine, who, when she saw how terribly he was emaciated, could not speak for crying. — “Will not Theresa come to me?” said he, faintly. — Josephine shook her head: “Would to God that I had never lived to see this day,” said she! “Who could have foreseen these misfortunes!” — “Torture me not by suspense,” cried he: “Is Theresa ill, or does she wish to kill me by unkindness?” — “She is very indifferent,” replied Josephine; “your apparent neglect has almost broken her heart, and occasioned her to take a very desperate resolution.” — “What has she done?” cried Henry, all in a tremour; “speak quickly.” — “She is gone into a convent, whence she declares she never will stir,” returned Josephine; and, continued she, “these letters she committed to my care, to deliver to you whenever you could be found.” — “My brother opened them
eagerly,

eagerly, and these," said Mrs. Belfield, giving Marcia some papers, are copies of them."—Marcia read as follows :

NUMBER I.

" Is it possible you can have deserted me ?—Ah ! St. Clairfont, my soul is in a tumult. — The sound of your voice still vibrates in my ear !— How came you at N - - - - ?—What cruel injurious suspicion did you harbour of your Theresa to induce you to conceal yourself ?—I am incapable of connecting my ideas !— Ah ! St. Clairfont, where are you ? — Shall I never, never see you again ! — Oh ! misery !—A black vapour clouds my sight ! I can - - - - -."

NUMBER II.

" What will become of me, wretch that I am ! A week is passed since I heard the fatal words !" " Ah !

VOL. II.

G

Theresa !"

Theresa!" "that escaped your lips.— You have neither come, nor sent. — Josephine has been to enquire privately at Count Louis's Hôtel after you; she has only heard that you were there about a week ago, but nobody could tell her whither you were gone.—Poor Louis de Salenciere has lost his senses! I shall likewise lose mine! He is confined raving mad, they say! and alas! I am the fatal cause! — Why was I born? Why doomed to be miserable, and make others so?—From the hour I lost my Father I have been devoted to misfortune: Your generous care seemed to ensure me happier days; I ought to have remained in the convent, where you kindly supported me.— There my life would have glided on quietly: I should have been exempted from much pain or pleasure; but your seducing tenderness made me forget my revered Mother's prudent lessons.

She

She warned me not to encourage you, in defiance of your parents : She begged me never to consent to a secret marriage ; and she advised me to seek in a convent that tranquillity, she feared, I never should experience in the world. — Would to God I had regulated my conduct by her wishes, and not been misled by my own. — Perhaps my too easy compliance with *yours*, lowered me in your opinion, else how could you have suspected my fidelity ? — What but jealousy can occasion your cruel neglect of me ? — I write hopeless that my letters will ever reach you ; possibly you are no more. — This thought overpowers me. — Oh ! that I were dead myself."

NUMBER III.

" My resolution is formed irrevocably ; I write for the last time. — Heaven certainly disapproves of our
G 2 union,

and inflicts misfortune on me, to detach me from this world of woe and misery! — I loved you too much; perhaps, had I continued with you, I should have become an apostate to my religion. — Ten long cruel days have elapsed since you were here; your renunciation of me, teaches me what I ought to do; yet my heart, my foolish heart rebels, and still attempts to vindicate you; but my resolution must not be shaken. — I have solemnly vowed and sworn, in the presence of the Almighty, to end my days in a convent; to take the veil, if my marriage is declared invalid, as contracted without the consent of your parents, and while I was under age: — But if it is ratified, and I am not allowed to bind myself by vows, I will, at least, devote my days to the most austere piety. — Should you now repent of your cruelty, it is too late; I never more will see you. — You have suspected

suspected and deserted her who would have died for you!—In some gloomy cell I will try to efface your loved image from my too ductile heart; but I will still cherish tenderly the remembrance of your generous actions; still will I recall to mind all your kind attentions, your goodness to my Mother, the delicacy that spared our blushes in the favours you conferred upon us; and my prayers shall incessantly be offered up to God for your happiness.

Adieu! Adieu! for ever!

THERESA."

Marcia returned the papers to Mrs. Belfield wetted with her tears: —
 "Amiable, unhappy woman!" said she, "what must her feelings have been when she wrote these letters! And what must your brother's have
 G 3 been

been in reading them ! Yet I cannot think he was to blame. — Appearances certainly were against her, and the agitation she discovered in that fatal interview with Count Louis, seemed occasioned by a struggle in her mind to suppress a rising passion ; but, perhaps, I am unjust ; pray proceed in your narration.

“ My brother was affected to such a degree at the lecture of these letters, that Josephine repented having delivered them to him. — He swore she should not continue in the convent, and that no power on earth should make him submit to live separated from her. — “ Explain, however,” said he to Josephine, “ the circumstances that induced Theresa to shew so much pity and indulgence to a man who dared to avow a criminal passion for her.” — “ She is not to blame,” said Josephine warmly, “ an angel’s
mind

mind is not more pure than my Lady's."

She then related what I have already told you of Count Louis's behaviour, from the time my brother left France 'till that fatal day when he unexpectedly arrived at N——.

"My Lady," said Josephine, "had been uneasy at not hearing from you when the English mail came in; she was sitting at the window after dinner, when she saw Count Louis ride up to the door: "His behaviour has of late been so unaccountable," said she, "that I am never easy in his society, and I would now refuse to see him, if I did not hope that he brings me some account of St. Clairfont. — "Be sure," continued she, "not to leave me alone with him." — Count Louis entered with an air still wilder than usual; he scarcely bowed, but

G 4

flinging

flinging himself into a chair, he sat a considerable time without speaking a word.—At last he fetched a deep sigh, and rising stood before my Lady. —

“ I am come,” said he, “ to bid you an eternal farewell. — I am going to send my wife back to her family, and as for me I shall fly into some desert, and end my days with wild beasts, the fittest companions for me.” —

“ Good God ! what are you saying !” cried my Lady, “ surely you are mad.”

“ Mad, aye, raving mad !” exclaimed he, the fire flashing in his eyes, “ and you are the cause, you bewitching sorcerers. — It is you, “ catching hold of her hand, “ who drive me out of my senses, and make a villain of me.” — My Lady, extremely frightened, struggled to get from him ; and I drew near, and asked what he meant by such behaviour :

He

He made no answer, but letting go her hand, he thrust me into the next room, and turning the key upon me, flew back to my Lady, who had seized the moment of his absence, to run into the garden, where she had seen the gardener but just before, but Count Louis overtook her in an instant: "By Heaven," said he, "if you attempt to escape, I will kill both you and myself; I am desperate, and care for nothing. — I see you for the last time, and you shall hear that I adore you: Oh! how I doat upon you." — "Is this," cried my Lady, St. Clairfont's friend that thus insults me? Is this the protection you promised me? Oh! Count Louis, recall those principles of honour you seem to have forgotten; blush at your treachery, and never let me see you more."

G. 5. The

The Count seemed awed by the dignity of her manner; he let go her hand, his head sunk upon his breast, and a few tears fell from his eyes. — “I am, indeed, a base wretch,” said he, “a vile perfidious villain; yet if you knew, Madam, the conflicts I have endured, you would rather pity than reproach me. — Ah! attend to me this once, a little indulgence may save me from distraction.” — “Indulgence!” cried my Lady; — “I only beg you to hear me; I will soon rid you of the sight of me. — When first I had the pleasure of seeing you, I thought you charming; but, well acquainted with my friend’s attachment, I considered you as a sacred object, and never allowed my thoughts to dwell upon your perfections. — I was happy I had it in my power to accommodate you with this house, and I protest when I gave your hand to my friend, I felt the sincerest joy in
your

your mutual felicity. — Without the least distrust of myself, I accepted the charge of guardian to you in Henry's absence; but, alas! I knew not the weakness of my own heart, nor the fascinating power of your eyes. — I soon found I only existed *here*; deprived of your presence I enjoyed nothing. — Alarmed at these symptoms, I determined to avoid you: I made my visits much shorter, and came seldomer. — You perceived my mind was distressed, and, without enquiring into the cause, you exerted yourself to amuse me. — Alas! you little thought the mischief you were doing me. — Mere beauty I could have resisted; but your sensibility, your tenderness, the enchanting sound of your voice, your soothing conversation, counteracted all my efforts to subdue myself. — Sleep now entirely forsakes me; I can eat nothing; a raging fever seems to dry me up, and

at times I feel all is not right here," said he, clapping his hand to his forehead. "In my lucid moments I shudder with horror at the idea of betraying my friend, and find that I must profit by this favourable interval of reason to tear myself from you. — Will you, when I am gone, when I can no longer be false to him, or offend you, will you then think of me with compassion? — Let me hear, Theresa, that you pity me."

My Lady was deeply moved; "I do, indeed, pity you," said she, crying; "and if you will promise to remove immediately with Madame de Salenciere from Montpellier, I will forget all that has passed, and attribute your behaviour to malady, which nothing will so effectually cure as calming your passions. — Absence will soon restore you to yourself, and, while you keep at a distance from me,

me, your friend shall remain ignorant that ever you deviated from the laws of friendship."

What Josephine further related, my brother, as you know, had heard himself.—His exclamation had affected and surprized both Louis de Salenciere and Theresia: Agitated as they were before, this shock overcame them: The former, however, soon recovered the power of motion, though not the use of his reason; he mounted his horse, galloped off furiously, unconscious of what he was doing.—Theresia continued a considerable time in a swoon.—Josephine, whom Louis had locked up, found means to make herself heard by some of the servants, and as soon as she was out of confinement, she hastened into the garden, where she was greatly alarmed to find her Mistress to all appearance dead: Her first idea was, that the frantic
Count

Count had killed her; she ran into the house for assistance, and sent for a surgeon to bleed her, having perceived she was in a fit, and wounded desperately, as she had imagined. — When Theresa had recovered the use of her senses, she called vehemently on St. Clairfont; and Josephine, who was ignorant of his arrival, apprehended her head was deranged as well as the Count's; but the arrival of Pierre, the gardener, who had spoken to his master, explained the mystery; he was immediately sent to Montpellier in search of him, but without success, and Theresa's grief and despair had increased daily, 'till she formed the resolution of retiring into the convent she had formerly inhabited.

Henry, after this account, could no longer think Theresa had been too indulgent; he pitied, most sincerely, Louis de Salenciere, whose behaviour seemed

seemed more the effect of malady than of a criminal indulgence of his passions.

Josephine was immediately sent to the convent, with a letter to Theresa, explaining all that had passed, and entreating her to come to him, as he was still too weak to go to her.

But no prayers nor supplications could ever prevail on her to see him; she said she rejoiced that she was justified in his eyes; that her love was undiminished; but that no consideration should induce her to violate the solemn vow she had made, to see him no more, and to end her days in a convent.

Her inflexibility retarded my brother's recovery.—The moment he was able he hastened to the convent, but he could not obtain a sight of her.—

The

The abbess came into the parlour and received him politely.—He urged her to persuade Theresia to come to him; alledging, that her prior engagement to him rendered her vow unlawful.

The Abbess said, Mademoiselle de Preulet was not his wife, that she had chosen her house as a secure asylum, and that she should, in no respect, pretend to controul her inclinations.—My brother protested she was his wife, and that he could easily prove it; threatened the abbess if she detained her; then had recourse to supplications, but all were vain.

A fresh vexation awaited him on his return home; Josephine had fallen down in a fit, and though she did not immediately die, she remained speechless, and expired a few hours after.—Louis de Salenciere was still out of his

his mind; he had ceased to rave, and he sat with his eyes fixed, his hands folded over his breast, and seemingly insensible to every thing. — My brother, deeply chagrined, could not bear to see him in this condition. — His only hope now of proving his marriage, and forcing Theresa to quit her retreat, rested on the priest who had performed the ceremony; but all his enquiries to find him proved unsuccessful; he had left Montpellier, and could not be traced.

Thus disappointed, Henry, after some weeks longer stay in that city, finding it impossible to alter Theresa's resolution, determined to return to England. — He had, by letter, relieved his parents from their anxiety as to his safety; but his unhappy story he concealed from them. — The day before his departure the Countess Louis

de

de Salenciere sent to entreat he would call upon her, and painful as it was for him to enter her Hôtel, he thought his abrupt departure, when he was there last, required some apology.

She received him politely, and readily accepted his excuses; she seemed confused, and attempted, more than once, to communicate something that her tongue refused to utter.— He scarcely dared encourage her to speak, but as she perceived he was going, she said, with a flattering voice, that she was unworthy of his kindness; that she blushed to own a mean desire of being revenged for his former neglect of her, had inspired her with the malicious design of awakening jealousy in his breast; that she had, by her emissaries, discovered his attachment to Theresa; and chance procuring her the acquaintance of the priest who had married St. Clairfont, she

she had learned from him (who had not the gift of retention) the history of his nuptials.—That Louis de Sallenciere suspecting his indiscretion, had sent him away. — That she had written Henry some anonymous letters, to tell him he was betrayed, and pleased at meeting him unexpectedly at her door; she resolved still further to foment the jealousy she wickedly hoped was already corroding his heart. — And that she had read her success in his countenance. — “Then your account of my poor friend,” said my brother, in a fury, “was your own diabolical invention!” — “No, indeed,” replied she, bursting into tears; “it was every word true, except my feigned ignorance relative to Theresa. — That he loved her I firmly believe; but that he combated his passion I am certain. Never would he have suffered a criminal passion for his friend’s wife to subdue his exalted notions of honour, had

had his intellects been clear. — Perhaps he might have been mad had he never seen Theresa; for he had a fever some time since, which he neglected. — An incessant thirst made him drink too freely; this inflamed his blood still more; added to which, the violent exercise he took in the hottest season of the year, might have the fatal effect of disordering his brain. — This satisfaction is due to him, would to God I could as easily clear myself of a most cruel design! — His terrible condition awakened remorse in my breast, for my conduct towards you; and the tenderest pity for my unfortunate husband. — Though he does not know me, I will never desert him, and do all in my power to relieve him; yet surely his death would be less shocking than to see him so different from his former self. — I wished, Sir, for this interview, to tell you how truly wretched I am, that

that I contributed to your misfortune ; and if the sincerest repentance can possibly atone for my wicked design, you will not refuse to forgive me."

My brother's anger was mollified by her tears. — Count Louis's parents had been absent, during these transactions, at Naples ; they arrived just after my brother had left Montpellier ; all their care, and the best medical assistance, did not avail in promoting that unfortunate young man's recovery ; he died a few months after ; but the last moments of his life were perfectly calm. — My brother returned to England almost broken hearted ; he communicated to me all the particulars of this sad story, and we both agreed, since it was impossible to prove his marriage, that it might as well remain concealed. — Yet, by his desire, I wrote to Theresa, to try whether I could prevail on her, at least, to see him. —

him.—She answered my letter kindly; said it was impossible she could comply with my request without opening wounds that were just beginning to close; that St. Clairfont was still dear to her; but that she was convinced they were happier asunder than they could be together; that her attachment to her religion, and the recollection of the terrible misfortune she had occasioned, would embitter their re-union; and she had solemnly vowed it should never take place.—She begged I would, annually, in memory of past friendship, favor her with a line, to inform her of our welfare:—And she concluded with telling me, that as her resolution could not be shaken, she should take it kind, never to be again importuned on this subject.

Twelve years have elapsed since her retirement; she is adored in the convent;

vent; and, without wearing the habit of a nun, she conforms to the customs of one, and sets the rest an example of the truest piety. My brother has amply provided for her, and she constantly prays for his happiness; but declares her mind is so thoroughly detached from all earthly considerations, that she can think of him without emotion, as Divine Love engrosses every faculty of her soul.

My brother fondly cherishes her memory; but he considers her as dead to him.—Immediately after his return from France he went into the army, and was sent abroad with his regiment, where he remained several years; during which period our parents died.—The family estate descended to him, greatly impaired; but *that* he thinks the least misfortune that has befallen him.—The loss of his Theresa, and his friend's tragical story, have impres-
sed

fed his mind with a melancholy, which is, I fear, incurable."

Mrs. Belfield ceased. — Both ladies had shed many tears, one in relating, the other in attending to, this melancholy story. — Mrs. Belfield perceiving Marcia was pensively ruminating upon it, said, with a forced smile, "So, you have no curiosity to know my history." "Indeed," replied Marcia, "I am always interested in every thing that concerns you; but I would not be impertinently curious." — "My story," said Mrs. Belfield, "is very simple. — I never had an *adventure* in my life. — I had little beauty, and not much fortune; but soon after we returned from France, my youth and vivacity struck Mr. Belfield: He was not disagreeable in his person, and had a tolerable estate, so I consented to marry him. — We jogged on together decently, without being very happy:
or

or very miserable.—The habit of living with him made me regret him when he died more than I should in his life time have thought possible; however, as that is three years ago, I confess, I am consoled.—I am perfectly at ease in point of fortune; live chiefly here; gay and contented; and though I have had several good offers, I do not think I shall be induced to change my situation.”

Marcia smiled at Mrs. Belfield's account of herself; but soon returning into a more serious train of thought, she asked her innumerable questions concerning Theresa; whom she thought unjustifiable in her conduct towards St. Clairfont; for she was of opinion that her vow was illegal; more the effect of pique and resentment than of religious motives; and that her fulfilling the duty of a wife would have been more pleasing

in the eyes of God, than either prayers or mortification.—St. Clairfont's character was exalted in her opinion, he was much to be pitied.—And while she dropped a tear for Louis de Salenciere's fate, she trembled to think of the sad consequences that followed irregular passions; for she thought his love for Theresa had been the first cause of his deplorable malady.

C H A P. XVI.

WEAKNESS AND STRENGTH OF REASON CONTRASTED.

IT is high time, now, to carry my readers to Grosvenor-Square, and renew their acquaintance with Lady Westland.

She

She still pursued the manner of life she had adopted, but her mind was less tranquil than it had been.—Lord Westland she considered as worthy of respect, but not formed to excite in her heart tender sentiments.—Lady Leonora Gray she detested, and not without some reason; her pedantic airs, her pride, and the authority she assumed over her, were insupportable to a spoiled beauty like Melissa: No longer in need of her countenance, she remitted her attentions to Lady Leonora; the latter resented the change, and soon they had incessant bickerings together.—Lady Leonora had consulted her own convenience more than any desire of obliging her nephew, when she consented to accompany him and Melissa to town.—Some necessary reparations to be done at Gray-Lodge, rendered her abode with them convenient, to which she was further induced by her desire of being

near Mr. Clifford, whose company she could not hope to have enjoyed in the country, at that inclement season. — Lady Leonora found Lady Westland still more ignorant than she at first imagined. — Nothing delighted her more than shewing the superiority of her understanding, and exposing the weakness of her niece's. — Lord Westland was not sorry to have such an Argus in his house; in spite of his passion for Melissa, he could not perfectly confide in her; his care, therefore, was to make up their quarrels, and keep peace between them.

Mr. Clifford was the only person of her family whom Lady Westland saw with unfeigned pleasure: He was, like herself, gay and lively, and an enemy to all thought and reflection.

Lady Leonora had vainly attempted, when he was a boy, to make him study:

study: Books were his aversion.— She saw this with infinite regret; but her pride made her love him, in spite of his faults.— She considered, with the greatest satisfaction, that she had it in her power to make the second son of the Westland family nearly as considerable as the eldest: She had even, in contemplation, a title, which she fancied she had interest enough to procure him; and she enjoyed, in imagination, his future grandeur.

Mr. Clifford had been running post over Europe above two years; on his return home he presented Lady Leonora with a book of notes he had taken of every thing worth observation, on his tour; she had received it with rapture; and regarded it as a very choice manuscript: It was indeed a *choice one*; being compiled by the gentleman who travelled with Mr. Clifford, from a variety of books.

To say truth, Mr. Clifford's own researches had been of a different nature: He had made himself acquainted with those cities in Europe most famous for good eating. — The discovery of truffles, in any place he inhabited, interested him more than any discovery in science. — He knew where the most exquisite pies were made, and even improved on those of Strasburg and Perigord. — He went into Holland on purpose to eat fish, and as admirable reasons had carried him to different cities on the continent. — He was not only an *amateur* of the art of cookery, but even no contemptible proficient in it; and the first cooks of Paris might have condescended to receive hints from a genius, who had so profoundly studied the matter. — Though he had not taken the notes with which his aunt had been so delighted, he had never failed noting the parti-

particular delicacies to be found in every city he had passed.

Next to a rage for eating, he had a passion for dress; his little figure was set out to such advantage, that his sparkling black eyes, and white teeth did great execution. This success cost him very dear; the expence of his wardrobe was enormous, and each suit occasioned him almost as much reflection, as an intricate point in politics, does to a state minister.

He was never visible of a morning, *that* was devoted to very serious avocations: Besides the toilet's rites he had perhaps to consider over a taylor's scheme for a birth-day suit; to invent some new pattern for sword hilts or buckles; to choose lace worthy of adorning his white hands and polished nails, or to correct the invention of his *Friseur*.

When he issued from his apartment, he exhaled perfumes where ever he went ; his hair was curled not too stiff, nor too negligently, in numerous *Boucles* ; his coat, whether plain or trimmed, distinguished from all others, by the elegance of its cut, and by a certain smartness peculiar to himself. So compleat a figure, seemed formed for dancing, and he was indeed the soul of every ball. — A mind like Clifford's, engrossed by such weighty cares, could not descend to that vulgar attention to pecuniary matters, which is thought necessary by people of ordinary genius ; the *sublimity* of his, however, occasioned him one small inconvenience, which was nothing else than a multitude of debts : These did not rest very heavy upon his spirits, as he knew Lady Leonora well enough to be certain, that her pride and affection would prevent his suffering any molestation from his creditors : She had

had before he went abroad paid his debts to a considerable amount, and the only effect this had was to encourage him to incur fresh ones.—

Since his return to England he affected to treat his aunt with a respect approaching to adoration, and would, with great complaisance, pretend to listen to her learned harangues. — As she had not the least suspicion he was laughing at her, her partiality for him daily increased, and she only waited 'till she could find a wife suitable to him, to settle upon him her estate.—Mr. Clifford, however, was in no haste to marry; he prized his liberty beyond measure; he flirted to-day with one pretty woman, to-morrow with another; the most lovely of the fashionable women could not fix his attention three days successively.

He dined almost every day at his brother's; made up Lady Westland's

H 5

party

party in the evening; then went to balls, Almack's, or clubs.—The admiration he felt for Meliffa far exceeded *that* other women excited in him; notwithstanding the languor occasioned by the inconveniences attendant on her situation, he thought her inexpressibly charming; he paid her every little attention in his power, and she re-paid him with such a bewitching smile as made him eager for a fresh opportunity of being thus rewarded. — Every morning he galloped down the King's-Roads, to procure a bouquet worthy of her acceptance. — All the new publications he sent her, that were likely to amuse. — Every little anecdote; all the little scandal and news of the day, he never failed to be the first to communicate. If her appetite was indifferent, he tried to excite it by some poignant sauce, or other proof of his culinary skill;

skill; and in this he gratified himself as well as her.

In short, without reflecting on the nature of his sentiments for Melissa, he felt he never was perfectly at ease when absent from her.

Melissa considered Clifford as essential to her amusement; she never thought beyond the present moment, and rejoiced to find one person in her husband's family sufficiently agreeable to reconcile her to domestic life. — Every day she found additional pleasure in his society; her cheeks, on his sudden entrance, glowed with delight; if any unforeseen event prevented his arrival at the expected moment, she felt uneasy, and dissatisfied with every thing. — These sensations she attributed entirely to friendship, and freely indulged them.

One day Mr. Clifford was to dine with a party in the country, and told Melissa in the morning that he should not see her 'till the next, she found the day unusually long. — Lady Leonora seeing her restless and low spirited, proposed reading aloud to her, and without waiting for her consent, began to read some of Carter's *Epic-tetus*. — This was altogether insupportable. — In vain she yawned; appeared inattentive; and fidgeted about the room; the inexorable Lady Leonora continued her lecture, 'till Lady Westland complaining of a very bad headache, declared she could sit up no longer, and must go instantly to bed.

Just as she was going to retire, Clifford suddenly appeared; he had changed his intention of passing the evening in the country, and was that moment alighted from his phaeton.

—Melissa's

—Melissa's heart bounded at the sight of him, she repented having mentioned her design of retiring, and sat still, hoping nobody would remind her of it.

Lady Leonora, who had been provoked at her behaviour, and did not believe in her indisposition, now thought it was her turn to torment. — With affected concern she enquired after the pain in her head, and begged her not to delay her intention. — Lord Westland, who had followed his brother into the room, demanded what that was, and, hearing of Lady Westland's complaint, pressed her earnestly to retire, and rung for her maid. — Melissa was on the point of telling him that she no longer required the repose, she had before declared so necessary ; but shame tied her tongue, and, with a melancholy discontented air, she left the room.

Her

Her departure disconcerted Clifford extremely; he had arrived in high spirits, intending to sup with her, who was become his delight; but disappointed in his view, he soon framed an excuse for quitting his aunt and brother, not without offering up in favour of the former certain ejaculations, which he deemed warranted by the cause. — The next morning he hastened his toilet to fly to Grosvenor-Square, impatient to enquire after Melissa's health; he thought himself fortunate to find her alone, and still more so, to observe his approach diffuse smiles and blushes over her countenance. — He seized her hand, and kissed it with rapture; told her how much he had been disappointed the preceding evening, and that he had punished Lady Leonora for her malice, by withdrawing immediately after Lady Westland's departure.

Both

Both Mr. Clifford and Melissa felt a guilty consciousness of a dawning passion for each other ; but neither of them attempted to stifle it. The former had early been spoiled by his aunt ; she had often made him discourses in her style upon virtue, and the government of the passions ; but, as a desire of displaying her own abilities seemed her principal object, they had made little impression upon him, especially as he had frequently experienced her indulgence to his excesses, and that, severe as she was to others, she was blindly partial to him. — He observed that his sister-in-law was as unprincipled as himself, and he suspected that she shared his guilty sentiments.

His conjecture was but too true. — Melissa had not been sensible of it 'till this period. — She thanked him with an embarrassed air for his anxiety
after

after her health, and she attempted to converse on different subjects as usual, but she could not conceal her agitation; and yet she was sorry when Lady Leonora entered, and took a part in the conversation.

When left alone, she recalled to mind Clifford's behaviour, and was convinced that she perfectly understood his looks and gestures. — For a moment she thought with horror of the consequences of this discovery, and half wished to discourage him, and subdue herself: This would have been practicable, had she been accustomed to check her passions; but too weak to resist them, she yielded to their imperious sway. — Uninfluenced by principles of virtue or religion, the fear of detection alone made her sometimes wish she could avoid him; but that was impossible, and, indeed, not heartily desired. — Some little gratitude

titude towards her Lord for his unre-
 mitting kindness, gave her some scrup-
 les; but she considered, if her par-
 tiality for his brother was confined to
 her own breast, she could not injure
 him by indulging it.—She forgot that,
 by similar sophistry, she had recon-
 ciled to herself her predilection for
 Philamour, which had been attended
 with such fatal consequences.—These,
 however, taught her worldly pru-
 dence; she contented herself with in-
 terrogating Clifford's eyes, and scarce-
 ly allowed her own to return him one
 favourable glance: But a thousand
 accidental circumstances betrayed to
 Clifford a secret that, perhaps, she
 longed to reveal; soon it wanted no
 confirmation, and their intelligence
 was established without the assistance
 of confidants or letters.—They scarce-
 ly ever had opportunities of seeing
 each other alone, for Lady Leonora
 and Miss Gray were constantly in La-
 dy

dy Westland's apartment ; yet sometimes when Miss Gray was absent, and Lady Leonora employed with her pen composing precepts for the benefit of mankind, or absorbed in sublime meditations ; Melissa and Clifford held together an ambiguous conversation, expressive of their mutual sentiments, and at the same time enjoyed the idea of duping their wise aunt.

These were transient gratifications, and vanished with Clifford ; in their room, remorse and anxious pain succeeded in Melissa's breast : — But her conscience became daily more callous, "What happier nature shrinks at with affright," she settled in her mind was involuntary, and as such reconciled it to herself.

While Melissa was thus sinking into vice, Marcia was lamenting that she had so long been ignorant of St.

Clairfont's

Clairfont's history, and had cherished an inclination for him, that her principles condemned. — Henceforth she determined to avoid him. — Her eyes were still red with weeping, and sadness imprinted on her countenance, when she met him on her return home, after Mrs. Belfield had concluded her narration. — He observed immediately that she looked unhappy, and seemingly catching the infection, he addressed her with unusual warmth; and attempting to take her hand, (which she withdrew,) enquired, with an anxious air, after her health.

Marcia, some days before, would have been delighted with his behaviour; but, now conscious of the insuperable bar betwixt them, it added to her misery, and, scarcely able to answer him, she hurried home. — She recollected that he had once said, "he wished he had never seen her." — She reflected

reflected on his guarded conduct, and, on his averted looks, with increased esteem:—"And if," as something whispered in her heart, "he really loves me," said she internally, "then how meritoriously has he acted!"—And again she lamented that his fatal marriage had not been revealed to her.—It was a circumstance not known even to Lord Westland; St. Clairfont had carefully concealed it; most of those entrusted were dead; the rest in a foreign country; and so many years had since elapsed, that, even in France, little more was remembered than a vague report, that St. Clairfont had been secretly married; but Theresia's residence in the convent seemed to contradict that, and, as she never acknowledged it, the annuity she received from St. Clairfont was paid to Mademoiselle de Preulet.

Marcia

Marcia from this period shunned St. Clairfont with the greatest attention; she even feigned indisposition to excuse herself from going often to Mrs. Belfield, or receiving her; she resembled her brother, and Marcia determined to banish his image from her heart: Her piano forte was sent away; all books of imagination excluded from her library; and she longed to return to the Hall, that she might not even hear his name.

While Marcia was thus nobly exerting the force of her reason to conquer her passion, orders arrived at Bath to Colonel St. Clairfont to join his regiment without delay, as it was ordered to embark immediately for America. — Poor Mrs. Belfield, extremely hurt at this news, set out directly with her brother for London; and, to avoid the pain of taking leave of her amiable young friend, she did
not

not inform her of her departure, but sent her a farewell epistle from the first stage.

Marcia did not faint at the perusal of it, as Ladies in romance are said to do upon every occasion; but she could not so far conquer human frailty, as not to repine at this unexpected stroke: She had sincerely wished St. Clairfont's absence; yet now that it had taken place, she felt the whole world a void.—She again perused Mrs. Belfield's letter, and perceived the word farewell had been written by St. Clairfont! she was tempted to cut out that word; but she remembered the characters were traced by Theresa's husband, and she had the resolution to destroy the letter. — Satisfied with her own conduct, she obtained the sweet relief of tears; these her Father attributed to her friend's departure, and

and she did not attempt to undeceive him.

Mr. Bumble now being quite recovered, was impatient to return home; the heat of the weather, which rendered Bath intolerable, hastened his journey.

Marcia rejoiced to quit a place which had lost *all* that had once rendered it agreeable, and besides reminding her of events destructive to her peace, was the present residence of a man whose very particular attentions for some time past threatened her with addresses, that she was not in the least disposed to encourage.

Much about the time Mr. Bumble and his daughter left Bath, Lord and Lady Westland and Mr. Clifford repaired to Beachly. — Lady Leonora and her companion were faintly invited

vited thither, which invitation was haughtily declined, and Lady Leonora determined to make any shift at Gray-Lodge (which, as I have already said, she was repairing) rather than continue with Lady Westland, whose inattentions to her had degenerated into down-right rudeness. — Lord Westland, tired of pacifying the incessant disagreements that arose in the female part of his family; of being himself reproved after Epictetus, “Take care not to be transported with anger, and affront your guests at a great expence; but rather delight them at a cheap rate by gentle behaviour,” and disgusted with the vulgar manners, and forward behaviour of Miss Gray; saw them depart from his house with no small satisfaction.

Mr. Clifford and Melissa's joy was still greater; they had suffered inconceivably by the constraint Lady
Leonora's

Léonora's presence imposed upon them, and the dependent situation of the former had often rendered it very difficult to conduct himself so, as to avoid offending either his aunt or his sister-in-law, when they were at variance together : However, by flattering each separately, and submitting to the caprices of both, he secured to himself their favour.

Melissa now pleased herself with the hopes of passing delightful days at Beachly !—No female companions !—Her Lord would probably be engaged all the morning in his grounds ; he was luckily (in her opinion) erecting a new temple at some distance from the house, and, as he was his own architect, she knew he would attentively watch the workmens progress.—What then could prevent her dedicating a large portion of her time to the only object she ever wished to

see? — Engrossed by these thoughts, her spirits were exalted to the highest pitch, and she arrived at Beachly full of gaiety and good-humour.

The morning after her arrival, she was rather disconcerted by Lord Westland's desiring his brother to accompany him in a ride, and removing every objection he urged to excuse himself; but a heavier disappointment awaited her the day following, when an express arrived from Lady Leonora Gray with a letter to Mr. Clifford, to inform him, that, by the sudden death of a Gentleman, member for — — — — —, a borough, where the Clifford family had considerable interest, there was a vacancy which she was resolved he should fill, and therefore, without delay, commanded him to repair to her.

It was impossible to disobey, nor, indeed, would his ambition have allowed of such a sacrifice to love. — He seized a moment to assure Melissa he adored her, and that he would fly back to Beachly the moment the election was over. — Her grief at his departure was in proportion to her expectations of happiness, and she was obliged to feign illness as an excuse for her dejection.

Clifford had now been gone some time ; things had not succeeded as Lady Leonora expected ; a strong opposition gave him little hopes of carrying his election. — While he was engaged in this disagreeable business, Lady Westland became in reality ill, and Lord Westland, alarmed, hurried her to town, where she was prematurely delivered of a daughter, who was called Caroline, after the late Lady Westland. — Though the Earl

had passionately wished for a son, he was too delicate to let Melissa see his disappointment; his tenderness never appeared so amiable as on this occasion.

CHAP. XVII.

JEALOUSY.—A NARRATION.

MARCIA wished extremely to attend her sister during her confinement; but no entreaties could move her Father to part with her. — Mrs. Lindsay occasionally, out of respect to Lord Westland, called on the Countess of a morning, and Sophia often passed the evening with her: Lord Westland, sensible of her worth, wished nothing more than an intimacy to take place between Melissa

lissa and Sophia; but the latter soon found, after Mr. Clifford's arrival in town, that she was an unwelcome guest to Lady Westland, and forbore going to Grosvenor-Square.—Clifford had lost his election; but he was consoled for his ill success, when he read in Melissa's eyes the pleasure his return gave her.

He devoted to her the chief part of his time; the opportunities Lady Leonora's absence gave him, made him allow a latitude to his passion it had never yet known, consequently it was increased on both sides.—In proportion as these criminal lovers grew happier, they relaxed in circumspection; yet Lord Westland's company, and those visitors, Melissa could not exclude, were such a restraint to them, that they turned their whole thoughts on the felicity they hoped to enjoy in the country, when the re-establish-

ment of Lady Westland's health would allow of their return.

A sudden coldness in Lord Westland towards his brother, nipped as it were in the bud their flattering prospects, and filled them with just alarm. — This coldness, like the black lowering clouds that prognosticate a storm, was likewise the forerunner of a terrible disagreement between the brothers.

Before I mention how it broke out, I must observe, that it is probable Lord Westland would long ago have been jealous of Mr. Clifford, could he easily have admitted into his heart a suspicion injurious to him; but the candour of his nature was such, that he imagined his brother as incapable as himself of a dishonourable action, and his wife to be of all objects the most sacred in his eyes. — Fully as he had experienced the levity of her nature,

ture, he had the weakness still to love her with unabated passion; it was with infinite reluctance he could suppose she had so soon forgotten his generous forgiveness of her former indiscretions.—He reproached himself for imagining it possible she could form an intrigue, considered by all laws, human and divine, in a peculiarly odious light; yet, by the alteration of his behaviour to his brother, we must conclude, that he suspected fraternal love might degenerate into an illicit passion.

One evening, that Lord Westland and Mr. Clifford had accidentally met at Kenny's, and supped in no great harmony with each other, the latter, unfortunately having drank rather too freely, was less upon his guard than usual; for, having observed that Lord Westland of late seemed to wish for a

L4. *pretence*

pretence of quartelling with him, he had studiously avoided to give him cause.

Burgundy and champagne banished this prudent resolution; to some severe thing the Earl said, while they were engaged at *quinze*, Clifford replied with great warmth; one word brought on another; the friends of both interfered to prevent things going further, and Lord Westland as angry, but more master of his temper than his brother, arose, and made a sudden retreat.

The next day Clifford, fully sensible of the scrape his intemperance had led him into, went early in the morning to make his excuses to Lord Westland; he was not visible:—Clifford then desired to speak with Lady Westland, but she was not up.—He immediately sought to appease his brother's

brother's resentment by a very submissive letter, and, to his great mortification, he received the following answer :

To the Honourable Edward Clifford.

" I have, with no small pain, perceived for some time, that our dispositions were not formed to associate together ; the less, therefore, we meet the better. — The rash words that escaped you last night, I consider as the effects of inebriety, and I can readily forgive them. — Other offences, of a more serious nature, I cannot pardon so easily. — Very cogent reasons determine me to decline receiving your visits for some time ; but hereafter, if you deserve it, you will still find me,

Your affectionate brother,

Westland."

Mr. Clifford raved and fretted alternately at the lecture of this letter; to find himself excluded from the sight of Melissa, was an idea that drove him almost distracted. — He instantly ordered post horses, and hastened to Gray-Lodge, to secure Lady Leonora's interest with his brother, though his hopes of her success were not very sanguine, as he knew she had, during her residence in Grosvenor-Square, lost much of Lord Westland's favor. — Lady Leonora refused all personal application; but wrote to her nephew to deprecate his displeasure against his brother. — Her intercession did not avail. — Lord Westland was famous for adhering to his resolutions; therefore, all that Clifford's friends could urge in his behalf, had no effect on the Earl. — Sir Harry Basil, who had more influence over him than any man, refused to exert it, and Clifford had reason to imagine, that

that he suspected the nature of his sentiments for Lady Westland.—She, too, attempted to soften his resentment; but *her* endeavour only increased it; and he cast on her one of those scrutinizing looks from which guilt shrinks appalled. — After that she never dared name his brother in his presence.—Her grief, at all intercourse being cut off with Clifford, was immoderate. — If she could have conveyed a letter to him, it would have been some mitigation to her pain; but who could she trust?—The complaisant, convenient, Mademoiselle Caquetteuse would have been of great use on this occasion; her maid at present was of a very different character, and had been, as well as her other domestics, placed about her by her Lord; and considering them as spies, she did not dare to confide in them.

In this wretched state of mind she left town to attend Lord Westland to Beachly. — Despair was painted on her face; the roses had given places to the lilies; and she seemed more dead than alive; Yet she was obliged to swallow the big tear, check the rising sigh, and force a smile when her heart was ready to burst. — What painful dissimulation does not guilt occasion!

Marcia had arrived at the Hall in very bad spirits, and as a little matter would put her father out of humour, he often shewed his displeasure that she was not gay. — The boisterous spirits, and rude mirth of his companions, did not enliven her; on the contrary, her sadness encreased when forced to submit to their society. — Mr. Bumble lamented that a good joke was lost upon his stupid girl, and puzzled his brain, to no purpose, to find out

out what ailed her. — Marcia had, however, one consolation which her sister was deprived of; conscious innocence: — This enabled her to review her past life without regret, and when she reflected on the conquest she was attempting over her heart, she felt all the pride and pleasure of self-approbation. —

A visit for ten days from Mrs. Lindsay and Sophia exhilarated her spirits. — Great as was her esteem of, and confidence in, Sophia, she did not reveal to her the secret of her heart. — Marcia had the good sense to know, that communications of this kind only fix still deeper in the mind the impressions it has already received; and that she who refuses to listen to the never-failing admonitions of her own reason, will be still less likely to attend to those of another — Both Mrs. Lindsay and her daughter had
suffici-

sufficient penetration to see that their young friend had lost that serenity of mind, for which she had formerly been distinguished; they spared her all embarrassing questions; but suggested several methods of passing her time usefully and agreeably, which would divert her thoughts from turning too much on herself. — Their departure was a sensible grief to her; but the sudden arrival of Mr. Netterville from abroad, again cheered her spirits.

She perceived, with regret, that his person was much changed; in lieu of the ruddy bloom of youth, a fallow paleness had usurped its place; he appeared pensive, and sometimes sad. — In other respects he was improved; his figure had acquired an air of fashion it greatly wanted before; and it was easy to perceive, by his manners, that he had been accustomed

to good company. His father received him coldly; he had never loved him since he went to school; and Marcia had long engrossed all the affections he was capable of feeling.

Charles Netterville and his sister became inseparable companions; they walked for hours together, and often rode. — He seemed to have something he wished to disclose. — “Pray,” said he, one day, “how do you like Sir James Ardent? He is a particular friend of mine; and I know he saw you at Bath.” — “Since you tell me he is your friend,” answered Marcia, “I must be cautious in giving you my opinion.” — “Speak freely, I beg,” said Mr. Netterville. — “Well then, as you desire it, I will tell you, that he appeared to me of a violent, haughty disposition, and I was particularly glad when I left Bath, to be out of his way, for he thought fit to follow me
like

like my shadow."—"He is over head and ears in love with you; and you judge of him harshly, and not with your usual candour; he is a man of parts, extremely agreeable, noble in his manners, not deficient in generosity, has an immense estate, and you must acknowledge a very fine figure."——

"That I don't deny," replied Marcia; "and as you know him better than I do, it is probable I may have mistaken his character; my father has a law-suit with him; where did you form this intimate acquaintance?"——

"By mere accident," replied Netterville; "I will tell you the whole story; it is quite a romantic adventure.

Though Lord Westland, when I was leaving England, strongly dissuaded me from going to Paris, and recommended me to turn my steps towards the Northern courts, I had
too

too great a desire to see the famous capital of France, to attend to his advice, and I bent my course that way. — On my route to Paris I perceived, about half way from Peronne to the next post, a gentleman walking on the high way, seemingly much discomposed, and a carriage broken down at a little distance. It was raining very hard, and I thought humanity obliged me to offer him my assistance, which I did the more readily as he appeared to be my countryman. — He thankfully accepted a place in my carriage, ordering his servants to convey his own on as they could. — We waited for its arrival at the post; and as it was in so shattered a condition as to threaten him with a long delay while it was repairing, I pressed him to accompany me to Paris in my chaise, as he was impatient to get thither: He consented, and I congratulated him on his good fortune.

tulated myself on the acquisition of an agreeable companion.

I found him a man of understanding, and well acquainted with the world. — From his servant I learned that he was a Baronet, and his name Sir James Ardent. — I instantly recollected that he was the gentleman with whom my father has so long been litigating the estate of Capt Green, and the object of his aversion; not being certain he might know Charles Netterville was his opponent's son, I thought it needless to mention it; but he soon convinced me he knew perfectly whom he was with, and that he was not so unjust to extend his dislike of the father to the son, who had never offended him.

On our arrival at Paris he was of great use in introducing me into the world; he had often been there before,
and

and had a numerous acquaintance among people of the first fashion.

Our habits of life and inclinations were similiar; we both loved play, and he was enabled freely to indulge in it, having a very large estate. — I was often pinched for money, and have more than once been obliged to borrow of him.

One day an acquaintance of mine told me, that Sir James kept the prettiest girl he had yet seen at Paris; that he was extremely jealous, and kept her locked up in his Hôtel; the latter part of this intelligence I doubted, because, as there were few days that I did not call upon him, I thought it improbable I should never have caught, at least, a glimpse of this beauty. — But my servant confirmed the account of my acquaintance, by saying he had seen her in Sir James's carriage.

carriage the day he carried her to his Hôtel, and that he had reason to believe she was still there. — He added that she appeared very young and extremely handsome. — Fired with curiosity, I resolved to see her, but how to do this was the difficulty. — The next day I called on Sir James, and met a milliner with a band-box on the stairs; and on reaching the corridor, I recollected that I had only seen the apartments on one side of it, so that probably those on the other were allotted to the lady. — I resolved, therefore, to pretend I had mistaken the door, and enter at the left instead of the right. — So assuming a *nonchalant* air, and humming a tune, I boldly marched into an anti-room; luckily the door was open, and I perceived the object I was in search of: But Oh! Marcia, how can I give you an idea of her loveliness! — She appeared not more than fifteen; and the

the prettiest creature I had ever beheld.

She was (as well she might) much surprized at my intrusion; and advancing towards me, blushing, asked what I wanted in English.—I feigned to start, and apologizing for my mistake, retreated slowly, bowing and gazing at her, in a manner that added to her confusion.

“You had gained, in a very short time, a tolerable stock of assurance at Paris,” said Marcia, interrupting him.—“I confess it.—You will easily imagine,” continued Netterville, “that I did not say a word of this manœuvre to Sir James; but now my curiosity was gratified, a more impetuous passion agitated my mind.—I thought of nothing but this charming incognita, and meditated perpetually on the means of seeing her again.”

I should have recommended to my servant to have formed an acquaintance in Sir James's family; but the fellow had been placed about me by Lord Westland, and I expected little complaisance from him.—What then was to be done?—I racked my brain to no purpose; at last, one evening that I perceived Sir James deeply engaged at *quinze*, I determined to make a bold attempt to get access to her.—I know you will disapprove of the method I took, and I cannot justify it; but I thought it unreasonable he should thus monopolize this enchanting creature.—Having often received notes from the Baronet, I found I could easily imitate his hand-writing, and I wrote very exactly in his hand these words:

Admit the bearer, who has something particular to communicate to you.

JAMES ARDENT.

This note I carried to his Hôtel, and, telling the Swiss I was sent on business from his master, was readily admitted. — I then knocked at the incognita's door, which was instantly opened by a little pert waiting maid, whom I instantly marked as my own: I gave her the billet, and told her to carry it to her Lady, and that I would wait there for an answer. — I could hear them consulting in a low voice together, and at last I was admitted. — Impudence aid me! said I to myself on entering the room, where the young Lady received me, and desiring me to be seated, she enquired my business. — I hemmed; said something about the weather: She repeated her question, and I opened my mouth to speak, but the deuce a word could I get out; a fit of coughing, partly real and partly shammed, seized me opportunely. — At last I took courage, and told her the truth, trusting Mar-

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cia to female vanity for an excuse. —

The young Lady smiled : — “ And pray, Sir,” said she, “ what account do you expect I shall give my uncle of this extraordinary visit ? ” — “ Your uncle, Madam ! ” said I, confounded ; “ I have been under a strange mistake ; is Sir James really your uncle ? ” —

“ Yes, Sir, he is my uncle ; what relation did you suppose between us ? ”

I made no answer, and she continued, “ Perhaps his unjust confinement of me might, in some measure, excuse my deceiving him ; but I know what is due to my own honour, and shall certainly tell him of your visit, and of the unjustifiable means you took to gain access to me.” — Convinced by her manner, and the haughty air she assumed, that she was really what she said ; I entreated her pardon, and, finding her inflexible, I insinuated artfully, that her information would probably produce a duel. — This had

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the desired effect; I obtained my pardon, and a promise from her that this affair should not be mentioned to her uncle.—Then, as men usually do, I encroached on her indulgence, and requested permission to prolong my stay. — I made such good use of my time that she became quite easy with me, and I gathered from her that her name was Julia; that she was Sir James Ardent's elder brother's daughter, who had left no other child but herself, and bequeathed her £30,000, on condition she married with her uncle's consent, whom he appointed her guardian, otherwise her fortune was to be reduced to £5,000.—That Sir James, thinking himself too young a man at the time of her Father's decease to take a young girl into his family, had sent her to Paris, where she had been educated in a convent: That Sir James had removed her thence about a month

before, and, whether from a distrust of her youth, or for what other reasons, she knew not : He kept her as secluded in his Hôtel as if she was in a nunnery.—That, indeed, he endeavoured to pacify her, by an assurance that when she got to England he would allow her more liberty ; but, in the mean time, it was very mortifying to her, never to see any company, or even to be indulged with an airing.

You will easily imagine I did not lessen her displeasure at this treatment ; I really sympathized with her, and prevailed on Julia to permit me sometimes to try whether I could not dissipate her *ennui*. — The poor girl, who had totally forgotten the haughty air she had at first assumed, promised she would receive me, and I took care at parting to make Mademoiselle Jeannette a handsome present,

sent, and to secure the porter in my interest.

After this I had several stolen interviews with Miss Ardent: I loved her passionately, and had the pleasure to find I was not indifferent to her; but still Sir James's consent was wanting to my happiness, and that I despaired of obtaining.

I determined to return to England, and see if I could prevail on my Father to give up litigating Copt-Green, that might facilitate matters; and I parted with Julia, after obtaining a promise from her, that she would keep herself disengaged. — Had my affairs been in a more prosperous situation, I should not have considered it as material, whether Julia had £30,000 or £5,000; but I had unfortunately deeply involved myself on first assuming the name of Netterville; my

unworthy friend, Sir John Wander, had taken advantage of my inexperience, to engage me in fatal transactions with Jew brokers ; so that, unless I can pay my debts, and get entirely rid of my annuitants, I shall never reap the least advantage from the Netterville estate ; and have besides reason to apprehend, that if my Father discovers my extravagance he will disinherit me ; but if I could obtain Julia's hand from Sir James, my debts might easily be compromised without my Father's knowing they had ever been contracted : Judge then how desirous I must be of forming an alliance so advantageous in every respect.—I had been but two days in town when I casually met Jeannette, and learned that Sir James and his niece were at his house in Harley-Street, where they had only arrived two days before.

I contrived to throw myself in his way; he seemed glad to see me: We agreed to walk together, and as we passed Romney, the painter's, we stepped in to look at his pictures. — One of the most capital portraits in the room, is that piece in which you are represented playing on the harp, and Lady Westland leaning against a column attending to you. — It immediately arrested the attention of the Baronet; “that,” said he, “is your sister, and very like; but who is that angelic creature with her?” — As you were much less in the world than Lady Westland, it did not surprize me that he did not know you by sight. — I gratified his curiosity, and he did not hesitate in pronouncing you (if like that portrait) the most charming woman of the two: He asked me a thousand questions about you, and my answers encreased his desire of being acquainted with you. — We met several

ral times ; but he never asked me to his house, as, I suppose, he found it not so easy to hide Julia in London as at Paris. — An accidental conversation with Sir Harry Basil, in Sir James's presence, and some traits the former related of your conduct in Grosvenor-Square, and of your attentions to your Father, still added to my friend's partiality for your character. — To my great surprize, he invited me to dine with him, and presented me to his charming niece : We played our parts admirably, and behaved with such a proper degree of formality, that Sir James entertained no suspicion of our having met before, — He seemed not displeased at the attention I paid her, and informed me he was resolved to go to Bath, and see whether my sister's portrait was like. — I smiled, and flattered myself Julia would accompany him ; but he thought that too gay a place for her, and

and sent her, during his absence, to a distant relation, in whom he could confide. — He asked me to go with him; but I civilly declined it, as I knew it would not be very pleasing to my Father to see me arrive with Sir James: I staid some time in town on necessary business, during which time I received several letters from my friend, expressive of his admiration of you; but complaining bitterly of your coldness, and apparent wish to avoid him. — Such, my dear Marcia, is the situation of things. — Could you be prevailed upon to see Sir James in a more favourable light, I have great reason to think he would not refuse to give me his niece: — Possibly he might relinquish his claim on Copt-Green, and the families would derive equal advantages from being so closely united.”

“ But the happiness of my future life,” replied Marcia, warmly, “ must be the sacrifice : I did not like Sir James when I saw him at Bath, nor has your account of him raised him in my opinion.” — “ What pray are your objections to him ?” demanded Netterville. — “ I have already mentioned his haughtiness ; I may now add his fondness for play, his suspicious temper, and tyranny to his niece ; even you, whom he called his friend, he had not the generosity to trust ; and when he did let you see Miss Ardent, it was merely a bait to lure you, to assist him in his designs on me. — To secure Copt-Green is probably the motive that induces him to wish to marry me ; but should that only be a secondary one, I should never be flattered with inspiring a passion by mere personal attractions.”

Oh !

"Oh! you are vastly too sentimental," cried Netterville; "any girl but yourself would be delighted to get a young handsome Baronet with a noble estate; and consider likewise that you might save me from ruin, and render me one of the happiest men alive." — "That motive would weigh more with me than those you alledged before," replied Marcia, "but I have no thoughts of ever marrying; have insuperable objections to changing my situation." —

"All this is stuff, and what all young women say," cried he; "but if you will tell me your affections are already engaged—then, indeed, I may cease to plead for the Baronet."—"I may reasonably object to him," said Marcia, colouring, "whether my affections are engaged or not; and you will oblige me much, brother, if you will drop the subject:—But though I cannot marry Sir James, I sincerely wish

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you

you may obtain his niece.”—“ You may just as well wish me emperor of the Turks ; that is full as likely to happen,” continued he, angrily, “ as the other, unless you cease to be cruel.” — And so saying he left her, not a little vexed at the persecution she foresaw she should undergo, and much grieved at the unpleasant state of her brother’s affairs.

C H A P. XVIII.

A DESCRIPTION OF BEACHLY.

THE PROGRESS OF VICE.

WE left Melissa deploving a separation that she ought to have rejoiced at ; but every virtuous principle was extinguished in her breast, and she could not conceal her inward wretchedness.

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Lord Westland enquired not into the change he perceived; but the frown that dwelt upon his brow, and his fullen voice, marked the discontent of his soul. — Melissa had seen him extremely angry before; but she had never seen a settled displeasure of any continuance in his behaviour 'till after they were settled at Beachly. — The remembrance of the Castle adventure presented itself in the strongest colours to her imagination; and, to avert the impending storm, she attempted to melt him by caresses and feigned tenderness. — The beauty and innocence of her infant daughter she imagined would operate powerfully in her favour; for which reason she frequently brought her in her arms to her Father, and had the satisfaction to observe *this* charm had sufficient influence to relax the severity of his countenance: — But soon a gloom again overspread it; he saw through

Melissa's flimsy arts; his reason represented her as unworthy of his regard; but still her beauty captivated his senses; he would gaze on her with admiration, catch hold of her hand, and then, all at once recollecting himself, break from her, and, with hasty step, quit the room:—Then retiring to his own apartment, he would fling himself on a couch, and remain for hours absorbed in melancholy cogitations.

Of a morning he occupied himself with rambling over his grounds, and overlooking his workmen; those moments were precious to Melissa; she passed them in solitude, and indulged herself in all the luxury of grief.

Never was there a spot more calculated for tender meditations than the extensive gardens of Beachly.

From

From the eminence on which the house was placed, as far as the eye could reach, it traced a silver meandering stream.—In the distribution of the grounds, the hand of Brown had assisted, but not forced nature ; each masterly stroke of his art had only served to bring to light beauties that lay concealed before, and to improve and cherish each gift the bounteous goddess had lavished on this charming spot.

A velvet lawn, gently sloped from the house down to the river, and served for pasture to some hundreds of sheep, which enriched the land, while they animated the scene. — A rising wood stretched itself to a considerable distance on the East ; its stems were washed by the river, and its feathered branches seemed to bend to receive the refreshing moisture. — On the West, the eye wandered over an immense

menfe Park ; the ground was beautifully irregular ; wild, and diversified with scattered herds of deer and cattle, groups of trees, with here and there a ſpire or a ſteeple peeping over their heads, and the view was terminated by riſing hills.

The cold blaſts of the North were kept off by ſome ſheltering mountains ; the ſides were covered with the ilex, the laurel and the arbutus ; and the ſummits were crowned with firs.

The ſhrubbery ſkirting the wood on the Eaſt, extended far to the South. — It was adorned with a prodigious variety of flowering ſhrubs and curious plants, collected from various parts of the world. — A few temples, deſigned after the beſt ancient models, were judiciously placed, and a bridge, particularly light and elegant, thrown over the river.

But

But amongst the beauties of Beachly, Melissa's cave was the most enchanting spot. — In the spring, the approach to it seemed a terrestrial paradise. — A gradual descent carried you from the house, through a winding path irregularly planted with firs and forest trees, skirted with laurels and flowering shrubs. — Here and there the eye caught thorns in all the pride of blossom ; their reign of beauty is but short, yet they stood alone on distinguished spots, and wreathed their trunks into many fantastic shapes.

The purple lilac in lovely clusters, and the un sullied white, vied with the Portugal laurel, and gelder rose in beauty. — Here festoons of *liburnum* and there the elegant *acacia* pleased the eye, while the air was perfumed with the united fragrance of sweet briar, and violets ;

“ The musk rose, and the well-attir'd woodbine,
 “ With cowslips wan, that hang the pensive head.”

In wandering thus, through a labyrinth of sweets, sometimes you caught a view of the adjacent country, and saw the water glitter through the trees; but often the closing branches confined the eye to the delightful spot around.—As you advanced, the shrubs gave way entirely to forest trees.—Majestic oaks, elms, chesnuts, and beaches formed into a spacious grove.—At first their tall strait stems appeared like columns set at convenient distances from each other; by degrees they pressed closer together; their bright tints disappeared; the deep recesses of the grove were darkened with the solemn gloom of cedars, and mournful cypresses, now quite impervious to the rays of the sun.—The paths became more numerous and intricate, 'till they brought you to some irregular steps cut in a rock; the light insensibly stole upon you as you descended; and at the foot of the

the steps you found the entrance of a spacious cave. — All here was hushed and silent, save that the trickling drops of a purling rill struck your ear, while it softly bent its way towards the parent stream. — A broken arch opened to your view the broad clear expanse of the lake, covered with numerous aquatic fowl, and weeping willows adorning its banks. — Round this cave no gaudy flowers were ever permitted to bloom; this spot was sacred to pale lilies and violets. — An out-let, at first scarcely perceived in the cave, carried you through a winding passage to an immense amphitheatre, formed by a multitude of irregular rocks; some bold and abrupt, others covered over with ivy, perriwinkles, and wall-flowers. — One of these grottos was destined for a bath, and ornamented with branches of coral, brilliant spars, and curious shells. — A lucid spring
filled

filled a marble basin in the centre, and then losing itself for a moment under ground, came dashing and sparkling forth at the extremity of the cave, and took its course over some shining pebbles, to the lake below.— Here, stretched supinely on a bed of moss, Melissa passed the sultry hours of the day.—It was the beginning of September, and the weather was unusually warm.—The grove, tho' less charming than when enlivened by the sweet song of the nightingale, and adorned with the tender foliage of the spring, was still delightful.—Melissa, to compensate for the loss of the lily and violet, had substituted the tuberosc, jessamine, and orange trees.—The pots were concealed in the earth, and they appeared natives of the cave.—Here all her thoughts were engrossed by the object of her illicit flame.—Here she formed schemes of delusive joys ;
and

and here no jealous husband, nor abhorred constraint, stifled the rising sigh, or stopped the flowing tear.

Sometimes her faithful memory guided her hand, while, with a pencil, she traced Clifford's image. — Thus was she employed one day, when she was startled at the near approach of a foot, and suddenly the object of her tender reveries appeared. — Scarce could she believe it was not a flattering illusion. — Rapture thrilled thro' her veins, and danced in her eyes, late so languid. — Broken words and interjections, at first, were the only language these criminal lovers could employ, 'till the tumult of their joy somewhat subsided, when Clifford told her, that he had been for some days concealed in the neighbourhood, watching for some favourable moment to see her. — A faithful spy had traced Lord Westland at a safe distance,
and

and informed him, that probably he might find Lady Westland in her favourite cave, as she usually passed many hours there.—The conversation between people who had been tortured with the pangs of absence; who had ever suffered a great deal of restraint, and now met, for the first time, where they had nothing to controul them, was not likely to be short. — The assurances of their mutual attachment, and their wild transports shall be passed over in silence.

At last Melissa recollected that her absence might be thought unusually long, and she dismissed Clifford, but not without promising him a meeting, in the same place, the day following. —She appeared before her Lord in much better spirits than before; she felt herself, indeed necessitated to restrain them, lest he should suspect there was some cause, unknown to him

him, for so extraordinary a change. — It did strike him, but attributing it to a return of her natural vivacity alone, he congratulated her upon it; and fondly believing she exerted herself to please him, he said some kind words to her, which proved, that amidst his jealous doubts, he still felt a tenderness, of which she was wholly unworthy.

Never night appeared more tedious to Melissa than did the present. — She counted the moments, watched the weather, as soon as she rose, apprehensive that something might prevent her meeting Clifford. — Breakfast was no sooner over than she hastened to get her cloak, and tripping across the hall, was just got to the door, when she met her Lord. — “Where are you going in such a hurry?” said he. — “To the menagerie. — I hear there are some gold pheasants just arrived,” replied

replied she, chagrined inexpressibly at this *rencontre*. — “ You can visit them another time ; I do not,” said he, “ feel myself inclined to ride to-day, and intend myself the pleasure of lounging with you in the grove.” — “ You are very good ; I - - I should be very glad - - - very happy to have your company ; but an unlucky pain in my head renders me little disposed for so long a walk.” — “ You are not often disposed,” said he with a sigh, “ to oblige me ; but I shall leave you to yourself.” — So saying, he walked away discontented. — Melissa was in an agony, for fear he should bend his steps towards the grove, and meet his brother. — She placed herself at her dressing-room window, whence she could observe all his motions ; she saw him walk up and down the lawn, before the house, and expected every moment to see him turn towards the

“ *fatal*”

fatal grove. — She was above half an hour in this state of cruel anxiety, which appeared to her half an age; when, at last, to her excessive joy, she heard him order his horses to be brought forth, and presently afterwards she had the satisfaction to see him gallop away.

Melissa having nothing to apprehend further, flew to the cave, where she found Clifford, alarmed at her delay, and anxious to know the cause. — She soon dissipated his uneasiness, and told him the tremour her Lord had thrown her into, by his returning kindness. — “Heaven grant,” cried she, “that my Lord may not come here; what terrible consequences would ensue, should he surprize us together! Why, why, dear Clifford, must we ever be separated?” — “I lament our cruel separation as much, if not more, than you do,” replied he. — “Not more, I am sure,” cried she, vehemently. —

mently. — “Alas!” continued she, “you can fly about and dissipate your mind; but I am doomed to drag on a wretched life with a tyrant, and never to see *him* my soul adores!” — “A remedy might be found to this, but - - -” — “What remedy? alas! there is none,” said she mournfully. — “Shall I name it?” — “Yes, yes, speak comfort to my heart.” — “Yet that heart will shrink when I have proposed it. — Have you sufficient courage to run away?” demanded he eagerly. — “Good heaven!” exclaimed she; “you cannot be serious!” — “Perfectly so; nor can any other measure remove our misery.” — “Then we must,” replied she, “be for ever wretched, for this is absolutely impossible.” — “nothing is impossible to love; it would be very easy,” continued he, “to escape. — I’ll engage, against this very night, to prepare every thing for our flight. — Fly, then, with

with your Clifford; let us be guided by our passion, and despise the prejudices of mankind." — "But supposing we set the world at defiance, can we steel our hearts," demanded Melissa, "against the cries of our own consciences?" — "We shall soon," said he, smiling, "lull them to sleep. — Attend, calmly, to what I am going to say; and I trust, my dear Melissa, I shall convince you by my arguments."

Is it not to reputation you would sacrifice our mutual happiness? — Do you think those that are slaves to it are repaid by a vain sound for their trouble; or that they are compensated for the pleasures they forego? — Certainly not. — In many parts of the world our attachment would not be considered as criminal. — Happiness you can never expect to taste with my brother, there can indeed be

none without mutual liberty. — Were he less tyrannic, less jealous, your being united to him by indissoluble ties, would prevent your ever feeling for him those sentiments that are incompatible with restraint. — You know, by fatal experience, the little indulgence you could expect from him, were he to discover our connection. — Perhaps he already suspects it; his behaviour to me renders this too probable; and possibly, at this very moment, he is meditating your ruin. — Save yourself, then, from his revenge; be not his victim a second time; fly with me; let us quit this kingdom, and pass over to a country where marriage is put upon a more reasonable footing.

There you will be an object of universal admiration, and not the less liked for a *foiblesse*. — In that charming country love is treated with an
indulgence

indulgence unknown in England.— I will not desire a constancy in you, which, perhaps, I am not capable of myself; however, not being shackled, we shall, probably, love the longer.”

“Your arguments are but too seducing,” replied Melissa; “yet there are circumstances that render me ir-
resolute.—If I go with you I must leave my little Caroline, probably renounce her for ever.—No, Clifford, no; I cannot leave my child.—An elopement, even in France, is considered as odious; and how would my crime be aggravated by your being my husband's brother!—Besides, too, can I forget that his severity was produced by my own misconduct; and can I acquit myself of base ingratitude, for his generosity and indulgence to me?—Oh! Clifford! urge me not to this atrocious act; have

pity on my weakness!" — Clifford now bit his lips, and with an air of stifled anger, said, coldly; "Let us then part; we will meet no more. — Your child, an infant, void of reason, is justly dearer to you than I am. — Your mind sinks under vain terrors; and foolish prejudices subdue your boasted love. — Your Lord, who has behaved so unkindly to me, and so severely to you, all at once appears great, good, and generous in your eyes! — Go, then, fall at his feet, shed penitential tears, and make your peace with him by betraying me." — "Barbarous Clifford!" exclaimed Melissa; "kill me not by unkindness! Oh! leave me not; stay a moment, I conjure you." — "For what purpose should I stay? — I have lost all influence with you; and now I bid you adieu for ever." — In saying these words he made a few steps, but was quickly stopped by Melissa; who, with

with a distracted air, exclaimed.—

“Stop—don’t go—I am almost distracted—what can I do?”—“Do!”

replied he; “what ever will make you most happy. — Think, charming Melissa, of the despair I shall feel if you continue obdurate; and paint to yourself the felicity we should enjoy together. — I see your heart relents; be mine, and only mine.” — “How can I get away, should I consent to your proposal?” asked Melissa.—

“Very easily; I am not suspected to be in this part of the world.—Fortunately, when I was here last, I carried away by accident, the key of the little gate in the grove, which opens on the road.—I can rely on Dumont’s making every necessary preparation for our departure; he shall have a chaise and four ready in the lane, because it is a very private solitary spot.—I will meet you in this cave, and convey you away, and we shall be many miles off

before your flight is discovered. — Your ready invention must furnish you with some excuse to get rid of your Lord, when you retire to rest : And as soon as every thing is hushed and quiet in the house, steal out, and love himself will guide you to this happy spot, where we will meet to part no more." — He paused. " Say, my angel, will you comply ?"

This weak unfortunate woman could no longer resist, and trembling, gave the fatal assent. — " May I depend upon you ? asked Clifford. — " You may—I swear I will be wholly yours.—Yes, Clifford, I will sacrifice every thing to you ; all considerations shall give way to love." — They then agreed to part. — Clifford exultingly retired ; and Melissa, like a wood nymph, darted through the grove, and reached the house.

She

She thought herself lucky in arriving before her Lord's return, which saved her from the embarrassment of accounting for her absence, after having, under pretence of indisposition, declined walking with him. — The agitation of her mind, in reality disordered her, and she could scarcely eat any dinner. — As the slightest complaint from her was sufficient to alarm Lord Westland, he expressed much uneasiness at the continuance of her head-ach; he felt her pulse, and finding it quick and tremulous, imagined she was feverish, and advised her to go to bed. — Apprehensive of *too much* attention she declined retiring so soon, said she would earlier than usual seek repose, but not yet deprive herself of his company. — She said this with one of those smiles, that never failed of fascinating him. — Lord Westland would not press any thing that was disagreeable to her; inwardly rebuked him-

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self

self for the sharp words he had uttered in the morning, and behaved to her with more tenderness than he had done, since the *fracas* with his brother. In order to amuse her, he produced a plan he had himself drawn of a conservatory; which she had long wished for: asked her opinion of it, and upon its meeting with her approbation, said he would give orders to have it begun immediately.

“We will get it up,” said he, “before the winter comes on, and you shall have finer flowers than any body.” — “Ah!” said Melissa, internally, “those flowers will never bloom for me!” and a deep sigh escaped her. — “My dearest life,” said Lord Westland, “I fear you suffer very much.” “I do indeed suffer,” replied she, but the cause was very different from what he imagined.

The

The letters now arrived from the post; there was one from Marcia, which contained what follows:

To the Countess of Westland.

Sept. 3, 1777.

“ My dear Sister,

It is no small consolation to me, since I am denied the pleasure of being with you, to hear that you are well and settled at Beachly; I know, and cannot wonder at your partiality for that charming place. — I remember how we were both struck with delight, when first Lord Westland shewed us the cave, which has ever since borne your name. — He had, you know, the gallantry to contrive a little *fête* to surprize us. — What an enchanting effect the flutes and clarinets had amidst the rocks, that echoed every note! — But when Fischer played upon his

L 5

hautboy,

hautboy, that beautiful rondeau he had just composed, I really thought myself in paradise. — I cannot help smiling, when I reflect on the mixture of joy and terror we felt at the exhibition of the fire-works! Every thing, then, was new to us; and every thing was delightful!

You tell me Lord Westland has still the same tender attentions for you he had then. — Ah! my dear sister, how happy you will ever be, if you set a just value on the advantages you possess!

Nature and fortune have been liberal to you; you are adored by a husband, worthy of your fondest regard: Blessed with a lovely little girl. — In short, every felicity seems within your reach! — How different is my fate! Yet, believe me, I do not repine.

You

You tell me you are become very grave; so much the worse; the change is unnatural. — Your charming vivacity endeared you to your friends: Yet, I acknowledge, it has sometimes exposed you to censures you did not deserve: Your prudence will now point out the just medium betwixt excessive gravity (which would be unpleasant to your Lord) and excessive gaiety, which would be prejudicial to yourself.

What a source of delight your Caroline, will be to you! — To see her little form by degrees animated by a rational intelligence. To observe how each week, month, year, adds to the embellishment of her person, and the improvement of her mind: — To enjoy the exquisite satisfaction of contributing to the advantage of both, by a liberal, well-conducted education. — *These, Melissa, I conceive to be*

some of the sweetest pleasures the human nature is capable of feeling.

You know my brother is with us; he is but in indifferent health. — My Father is well; sends his love to you and Lord Westland. — My best wishes attend you both.

I am ever, my dear Sister,

Most faithfully yours,

MARCIA."

Lady Westland's heart seemed to sink within her while she was reading this letter; she put it into the Earl's hand, and was scarcely able to wish him a good night, as she precipitately left the room.

The circumstance, mentioned by Marcia, of the *fête* Lord Westland had given at the Cave, gave her a
severe

severe pang.—That Cave was now the scene of her guilty meetings with her husband's brother! The esteem Marcia expressed for Lord Westland, the confidence she had in her *prudence*, and, above all, the charming sketch she had given of maternal joys, seemed like so many daggers to her heart. — “Little does Marcia think, little does she imagine,” said she, inwardly, “that her letter would reach me in this fatal moment, the most critical of my life! — What a situation is mine! — She talks of happiness! — Happiness at Beachly, from which Clifford is excluded! — Ah! no! — There can be none without him. — Marcia cold, prudish and insensible, has never known the effects of passion; she has never experienced the racking pangs my soul at this moment endures. — Well may she reason coolly.” — Melissa then, as was usual to her, went to visit her infant, who was asleep in its cradle.

cradle.—It was a lovely baby, and she stood for some time gazing on it with a mixture of grief and admiration!—“Is this,” said she softly to herself, “the last time I shall behold you!—My God! have I purposed to quit you, to forsake your helpless infancy, to rob you of the care and attention of a Mother!—And for what?—To devote myself to infamy!—What a wretch I am!”—“See! see! she wakes!” said she aloud, “my little Caroline smiles upon me!”—Then pausing, she expostulated thus with herself:—“How can I have the heart to leave her?—To forfeit all right to my child’s esteem hereafter—To be a stranger to her, perhaps never named in her presence, or else held out as a fatal example of vice!—Oh! Clifford, what have I promised!—It is now too late to retract!—I must—yes, I must go.”—Then snatching the child from the nurse’s arms, she pressed it to her throbbing;

throbbing bosom, while the tears stood in her eyes; and, having kissed it repeatedly, laid it gently in the cradle, and hurried out of the room. — Scarcely had she reached her own apartment before she longed to return, and have one more look at her child: Full of remorse for her criminal design, she would at that instant have given the world to recall her promise. — “Suppose,” said she to herself, “I break it. — It is not yet too late; I may yet retract. — What will be the consequence? — Clifford, who depends upon it, will pass the whole night in all the horrors of suspense; at length, convinced I have deceived him, his haughty spirit will be offended; he will never forgive such a disappointment, but fly from Beachly, and renounce me for ever. — Never more shall I see him, never hear that soft bewitching language that melts my very soul.”

This

This idea triumphed over her late remorse; she hastened to be undressed, and dismissed her woman. — Lord Westland, at his usual hour, repaired to his own apartment; in passing by Melissa's he opened the door softly, to listen whether all was quiet; with indescribable agitation she saw him; but not stirring, he fancied her asleep, and retired.

She judged it prudent not to stir 'till one o'clock; the intervening time she endured all the pangs of contending passions. — Dreading to move, and yet impatient to be gone; she sat with her eyes fixed on her watch, counting the moments. — The least noise, even the cracking of the floor, made her start; the blood retreated from her cheek, and rushed with chilling fear to her palpitating heart.

How

How lazily she thought time moved, and how she fretted that she could not quicken his pace! "If," said she, "some unfortunate accident should prevent Clifford from meeting me, or that, without effectuating my design, it should be discovered, I shall not only be exposed to shame and confusion, but probably be immured for ever in that detestable Castle, where I passed so many wretched months!—If I can but get off happily, I have nothing more to fear; Clifford's tenderness will compensate for these anxious moments. — It is impossible he can be ungrateful; he can never forget the sacrifices I am going to make him. — Fame, rank, fortune, and what is still dearer, my child! for him forsaken!" — All had for some time been still and quiet in the house; she now ventured to rise, and, putting on a riding habit, prepared for her flight.—She made a small
parcel

parcel of the things most necessary to her, packed up a few of her jewels, and took what money she had in her possession. — Her apartment being on the ground-floor, with the assistance of the sheet, she gently slid herself from the window.

The moon shone, and she tripped over the Lawn as fast as her feet would carry her. — She had reached the shrubbery, and, as she advanced, the trees intercepted the light of the moon, so that her courage failed as the darkness increased. — Each knotted shaggy trunk of a tree, her alarmed imagination transformed into some horrid spectre, some fearful giant, or what, perhaps, would be more terrifying than either, her injured husband pursuing her. — For an instant she stopped to listen if she could distinguish the sound of a foot, and then, hearing no noise whatever, she encouraged herself

herself to proceed again ; and on she boldly rushed through the thickest part of the Grove, which was even gloomy when the sun was in its meridian, and at this time was entirely dark, except a casual ray of light from the moon, which, piercing faintly thro' the foliage, seemed, as Milton expresses it, to render "darkness visible."

But of a sudden horror again assailed her ; something brushed by her, and easily overthrew her tottering frame ; luckily she fell on the moss, and received little hurt. — A cold dew now stood on her face, her limbs shivered, her teeth chattered, and she had not resolution to move : By degrees she ventured to raise her head, and stretch out her hand, and, perceiving nothing, she took courage to rise.

Once

Once again on her feet, she advanced with cautious step, when the bleating of a sheep close to her, tho' it startled her at first, dissipated her former terrors, and she found this poor animal, which had strayed into the Grove, was the nocturnal foe that had occasioned her fall.

And being now a very little way from the place of appointment, she hastened thither with renewed courage. — Mr. Clifford met her at the entrance of the Cave, where he had expected her with eager impatience. — Now, free from all imaginary fears, she took hold of his arm, flew rather than walked to the little gate, and presently arrived at the spot where Dumont, as had been agreed, waited for them with a chaise and four. — The postillions had received their lesson, and, as soon as they were seated in the carriage, drove off full speed.

— As

— As on the coast of Sicily the sea sometimes represents scenes of palaces, castles, colonnades, &c. adorned with the most brilliant colours; so Clifford painted scenes of love and pleasure, which, like the magical illusions, ascribed to *La Fata Morgana*, were equally ideal, but coloured by romantic passion.— On these, to prevent all sad regrets, he drew Melissa's attention; but still her thoughts would often revert to the real advantages she had renounced; every smiling infant she saw in the villages she passed, seemed to reproach her desertion of her child.— Every eye that was fixed on her, seemed to express abhorrence of her base ingratitude, and unnatural conduct: — And every moment she expected to be overtaken by Lord Westland, and treated as she deserved.

But when she had crossed the sea without accident, she considered herself

self as secure; her regrets faded insensibly away, and Clifford reconciled her to her situation.

“Corre è non ha d'onor cura, o ritegno.”

The morning of her departure Lord Westland, as soon as he rose, repaired to her chamber, anxious to enquire after her health. — He was surprized not to find her there at so early an hour; the window was wide open, and every thing about the room much as he had left it the preceding night. — As it was a very wet morning he could not suppose her out, so he went to the nursery to seek her there; she had not been seen he was told by the nurse, and her own woman, whose countenance denoted alarm. — Lord Westland's agitation decreased every instant; yet too prudent hastily to betray his apprehensions, he himself searched all over the house and gar-

dens for the fugitive.— On returning to the house, Lady Westland's maid informed him she missed several articles belonging to her Lady; some of the jewels had been taken out of the cabinet, and the key she found in the lock; and, to clear up matters entirely, she made him observe the sheet rolled up, which had apparently been flung in at the window. — Lord Westland's heart trembled with horror; he bid her say nothing of what she had observed, but to send Clark, the steward, to him in the library.

A sad misgiving, that his brother was the ravisher, sharpened the pangs he endured. — His honest servant, of whose attachment he had had repeated proofs, shewed; by his countenance, how much he shared the different emotions that alternately prevailed in the mind of his Lord; he could scarce refrain from expressing his indignation

dignation at Lady Westland's atrocious conduct. — Her guilt appeared too clear to both; but her accomplice was still unknown. — Clark was dispatched into the village, to make enquiries; there he learned, that a gentleman had privately lodged at the Bear; and circumstances induced him to believe it was Mr. Clifford, in disguise. — On Lord Westland's sending for the master of the Inn, by threats, he extorted from him a confession, that it was his Lordship's brother who had secreted himself in his house, and that he had left it in the middle of the last night.

Lord Westland, shocked at this confirmation of his suspicions, enraged against his wife and brother, determined to pursue them, to frustrate their guilty plan. — But he found it impossible to overtake them. — Beachly became odious to him, he went immediately

mediately to town, and took the proper measures to obtain a divorce; and the evidence of Lady Westland's guilt was too strong to admit of a doubt of his obtaining it.

All tenderness for Melissa was now extinguished in his breast: Contempt took its place; and he wondered that he could so long have been attached to so unworthy an object.

CHAP. XIX.

THE GENEROUS SACRIFICE.

DESERTION, AND A SAD REVERSE OF
FORTUNE.

MARCIA was far from being in a tranquil situation at the Hall. — Her brother had forborn
Vol. II. M urging

urging her to marry his friend; but he was cold and unkind in his behaviour to her; and what gave her still more uneasiness, was the alarming decline of his health. - A low nervous fever preyed upon him; and when ever she seemed uneasy about it, he never failed to throw out some sarcastic expression on her pretended affection.

His illness made such progress, that it was thought advisable to consult the faculty. — some eminent physicians attended him, and their opinion communicated to Marcia, that his disorder arose from a disturbed mind, threw her into the most cruel anxiety.—She attended him constantly with the tenderest care, but her conduct operated no alteration in his behaviour. — She was one day in her own apartment, when she received a message from Mr. Netterville, to desire

fire she would come to him immediately. — He was in bed, pale and emaciated; but his eyes shone with unusual lustre. — He took her hand, as soon as she drew towards him, and looking earnestly in her face; “You are kind and good,” said he, “and you say you love me. — It is in your power to prove your sincerity. — Read this letter, and consider whether you can still refuse contributing to my happiness.”

Marcia, with a trembling hand, took the letter, and read as follows:

To Charles Netterville, Esq;

“I am uneasy, my dear Charles, at your silence; I have been for some time in expectation of seeing you in town; but as you do not come, I shall commit to writing some propositions, which I submit to your

M 2

con-

consideration; and I flatter myself they cannot fail of meeting with your approbation. — You are not unacquainted with my opinion of women in general: Pope has admirably well defined them; but though few of them have any character, they are all vain and credulous, weak and wanton. — A few exceptions may, perhaps, be admitted, and I am well-disposed to believe your sister Marcia one of them. — The amiable character she bears in the world, and her lovely form, have entirely conquered my objections to matrimony. — I love her passionately, and commission you to make her an offer of my hand and fortune. — Her reserve at Bath by no means discourages me; she was then ignorant of my intentions, and now, that I have declared them, she has too much good sense to reject a man of my rank and fortune.

Mr.

Mr. Bumble, I hope, will not be averse to my addresses to his fair daughter; especially when he hears that I will, in his favor, renounce my claim to Copt-Green.—The settlements shall be proportioned to my estate, which is large and unencumbered: We shall have no difficulties in arranging pecuniary matters.

As for you, my young friend, if you can prevail on your sister to smile upon my suit, I will make you completely happy.—I know your involved situation, and shall rejoice to extricate you from it. — Julia is an amiable girl, and if she marries with my approbation, will have £30,000. She shall be yours; her fortune will more than clear the Netterville estate; and that you may set out in the world handsomely, I shall desire your acceptance of £10,000 as an uncle's bridal gift.

M 3

You

You know the impatience of my nature; therefore hasten your answer I conjure you; if it is such as I wish, and may reasonably expect, I shall hasten to the Hall, to pay my respects to Mr. Bumble, and receive from your charming sister, a confirmation of my happiness. — When I tell you Julia shall accompany me, it will be an additional motive to you, for promoting the wishes of,

Your sincere friend, and

Obedient Servant,

JAMES ARDENT.

Harley Street, Tuesday.

Mr. Netterville watched his sister's countenance while she read this letter, which she coolly returned to him, when she had finished it. — “Can any thing be more generous than Sir James's propositions?” demanded he. — “They are

are certainly advantageous to you and my father," answered Marcia; "but his motives," continued she, "are entirely selfish, and such as might be expected from a man capable of forming such illiberal ideas of women."—

"But he pays you the highest compliment in distinguishing you from the rest of your sex," said Netterville. — "The distinction does not flatter me," returned Marcia; "and I am more than ever disgusted with his pride and vanity."—"So then you will not accede to his proposal?"—

"Indeed I cannot. — If he is really generous, he will not," said Marcia

{ "refuse to make you happy; Julia may still be yours, though I decline his offer; and you may be certain of finding a disinterested friend in Lord Westland, who will settle with your creditors your present difficulties, and wait 'till you are enabled hereafter to repay him.—My mother's

fortune is settled on Melissa and myself; I will engage to secure to you my share of it; in short, there is nothing I will not do, to prove my affection for you, except marrying a man I cannot like."—"Then," said Mr. Netterville, throwing himself back in his bed, "I have nothing to do but to die.—All hopes of happiness are fled, and you endeavour to delude me with visionary schemes.—"Know," continued he, raising his voice, "that I can expect no assistance from Lord Westland.—This morning an express came from him, with a letter to me, containing the most shocking intelligence.—You will shudder when you hear it."—Marcia terrified, eagerly enquired what it was, and when he had communicated it, which he did very abruptly; she was so affected that she was ready to faint.—Netterville, alarmed, rung for assistance, and she was carried into the air.—

Mr.

Mr. Bumble no sooner heard of her indisposition, than he hastened to her; he was half mad when he found her incapable of speech, tossing his wig into the middle of the room, he stood wringing his hands, and exclaiming he was undone.—As soon as she began to revive, he flew to her, and catching hold of her hand, “Speak to me this moment,” cried he; “what the deuce has been the matter with you? you have frightened me out of my wits.—You are always poking in your brother’s hot room; the devil’s in’t if he has not people enough to nurse him without you. — But you always prefer every body’s company to mine.” — Marcia was accustomed to his oddities; and sensible, though he shewed his affection so roughly, that he had a great deal for her; she, therefore, hastened to tell him she was better, and to assure him that nothing gave her so much pleasure as to at-

tend him.—He then kissed her, and went out a shooting; but prohibited her returning any more that day to her brother's apartment.—Marcia had no desire to disobey him; her mind was engrossed by a variety of unpleasant reflections, than which, none were so painful as those occasioned by her sister's infamous conduct; she dreaded her father's hearing of it, as she knew the violence of his temper; yet it could not be concealed, and she resolved to break it to him that evening.—He swore bitterly upon hearing of it; and uttered imprecations too shocking for Marcia's gentle nature to hear; but on seeing how he affected her, he dropt the subject, vowing he never would hear Melissa's name again as long as he lived.

Marcia passed a sleepless night, often regretting, that her brother's restoration to health and future happiness

pinefs seemed to depend upon the sacrifice of her own. — But how great was her concern the next morning, when she heard that his fever was very high, and that he had been delirious frequently, in the course of the night! — She hastened to his chamber; as soon as he saw her approach, he turned from her and covered his face with his hands. — “Do not disturb me,” said he, in a very low voice; “I hope my sufferings will soon end; yet it is somewhat hard to be thus cut off in the prime of life.” — Marcia, extremely affected, endeavoured to cheer his spirits, but he would not attend to her. — “It is all over with me,” said he mournfully; “the fortune bequeathed me is already gone; I am harrassed by creditors, and am certain of being disinherited by my father as soon as he is acquainted with the state of my affairs. — One friend alone offers to assist me, but I cannot avail

myself of his kindness; I cannot think of applying to Lord Westland, who has already been very kind to me, and this is not the moment for me to importune him. — I submit, therefore, quietly to my fate; yet, Julia, beloved Julia, not without a pang when I think of thee! — As for you, Marcia, you ought not to cry, for your heart can feel but little; and when I am no more, you will become a great heiress, and may satisfy every wish of your soul.”

Marcia, who had a superior understanding, penetrated her brother's design of working upon the susceptibility of her heart; yet, as she loved him, and considered that an invincible obstacle opposed her union with St. Clairfont, she began to doubt whether she ought not, by a generous effort, consent to an union that would ensure the felicity of so many, and would,

would, whatever misery it cost her, be attended with less pain than she should experience, if, by refusing to serve her brother, she became, in some measure, accessory to his death; and, strong as his passions were, the disappointment of all his wishes might not improbably produce that event.

Mr. Netterville drew a favourable omen from her silence; he took her hand, and pressing it to his lips, shed a tear upon it. — Marcia, already softened, could no longer refuse her acquiescence with his wishes. — In his weak state he was scarcely able to bear the tide of joy that flowed into his heart; a thousand times he thanked her with the most passionate expressions of love and gratitude, and promised he would keep himself very quiet the rest of the day, and think of nothing but the restoration of his health. — Whether his malady was come to a crisis, or whether his brightened prospects had

a happy effect on his health, I know not; but from that hour he mended surprizingly.

Netterville the next day desired to speak with his Father; he then communicated to him the whole of Sir James Ardent's letter, except what related to his debts. — Mr. Bumble could scarcely believe the Baronet was serious; he shook his head incredulously: "What give up his claim on Copt-Green, that he has been plaguing me about these three years! No, no, no; all a trick," cried he. — Mr. Netterville at last convinced him that his friend was serious, and the Justice, rubbing his hands, walked briskly up and down the room, calculating how much his income would be encreased by the quiet possession of Copt-Green.

Hitherto his thoughts had been confined to that single proposition;
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all at once he recollected the condition on which it was made. — “What part with Marcia! Oh! Lord! Lord! how can I do that?” muttered he to himself; “yet the fellow has a fine estate, ten thousand a year at least: — Then to have Copt-Green without further trouble, to get Charles too handsomely off my hands. — The Baronet’s proposal cannot be rejected.” — The possibility of a refusal from Marcia never occurred to him; he ordered his son to notify to Sir James his entire approbation of his proposals, and to give him a cordial invitation to the Hall.

Marcia’s presence was next desired. — Mr. Bumble congratulated her on the conquest she had made of a handsome young Baronet, with ten thousand a year; and in high spirits, communicated to her the circumstance relative to Copt-Green. — Marcia,
with

with an aching heart, resigned herself to the disposal of her Father, who commended her obedience, and said he should stipulate with Sir James that she should always pass three months in the year with him: "Hang it," muttered he to himself, "I had rather part with every tooth I have in my head (the sacrifice would not have been great); nay, I had rather part with every horse I have in my stables, Miss Wanton and all, and every hound in my kennel, sooner than part with my little girl. — Who will now nurse me? — Who will manage my family? — Every thing will now go at sixes and sevens. — I lost, God knows what, when Marcia was jigging about in London. — Well, well, it can't be helped, Capt-Green must console me."

Marcia, when once she had determined to give her hand to Sir James, resolved

resolved to do it with a good grace. — As the happiness of her future life must now depend upon him, she thought herself obliged to omit nothing to please him, and to secure his esteem. — She never allowed herself to reflect that there was a man existing whom she had tenderly loved; but, summoning all her courage to her aid, she prepared to receive the Baronet with complacency. — He was transported with joy at the receipt of Netterville's letter. — He hastened to procure from his lawyer a formal renunciation of his rights and titles to Copt-Green, and taking with him a full and clear account of his whole property, went immediately down to the Hall with his niece, where he was received cordially by Mr. Bumble, affectionately by his son, and civilly by his daughter. — The latter was much pleased with Julia, and Mr. Bumble, clapping his son on the shoulder,

shoulder, told him he was the luckiest fellow in the world, to get, without any trouble, a prodigious fine girl with such a fortune. — Netterville knew it had not been with as little trouble as his Father imagined; but he acknowledged his felicity, and, as his health was almost entirely restored, it seemed settled on a secure basis:— He and Sir James privately conferred on the subject of his debts; and the latter took upon himself to make the best terms he could with his creditors; many were induced to compromise, and Netterville's affairs were soon after settled entirely to his satisfaction.

Though Marcia never refused to listen to Sir James's professions of love and esteem, she could not prevail on herself to make him any other return, than an assurance that she should think it her duty to contribute
all

all in her power towards his happiness; and that she was extremely grateful to him for his generous assistance of her brother. — Sir James in vain pressed her to acknowledge warmer sentiments, but he could not succeed; like all lovers self-deluded, he flattered himself when she became his, her coldness would vanish; every day his admiration for her encreased; and he felt certain that he could not fail of being perfectly happy with a woman, whose every action seemed guided by reason.

He went even beyond Mr. Bumble's wishes in the settlements he made upon her; and the Justice, for the first time in his life, shewed a disposition to be generous; for he not only gave her a handsome fortune, but presented her with a purse tolerably filled, to purchase cloaths, &c.

At

At last the lawyers having (after many delays) concluded their part of the business, the nuptials were celebrated. — Sir James Ardent received the hand of Marcia from her Father, and Mr. Netterville that of Julia from Sir James.

Mr. Bumble determined he would be very jolly on this occasion ; he gave several great dinners, and got drunk almost every day. — His heart was so much expanded with joy, that he ordered an ox to be roasted whole, and his strong beer to flow copiously for the entertainment of the village. — In the midst of these rejoicings, one heart alone bore the pressure of secret pain ; need I say this was Marcia's ? — Sir James Ardent was impatient to carry his bride to his seat in Westmoreland. — About a fortnight after her marriage, Marcia bade adieu to her Father, whose eyes glistened as
he

he gave her a parting kiss. — Netterville and Julia, accompanied Sir James and Lady Ardent, which afforded the latter some consolation. — Arrived at Southcote (Sir James's seat) she endeavoured to regain her cheerfulness, and to reconcile herself to her fate, by reflections on having procured her brother's happiness, and by the consideration that her ample fortune would enable her to diffuse joy and comfort amongst her poor neighbours at Southcote. — She studied Sir James's disposition attentively that she might regulate her conduct to his wishes; she found he hated to be a moment alone, that he disliked music, that he detested the society of his country neighbours, and that his greatest pleasure was hunting. — In consequence of these observations, she gave up music, and all elegant employments in her dressing-room, to walk and ride with him; and

finding

finding nothing would be so agreeable to him as her company in the chace, she tried to conquer her timidity, and accompany him a hunting. She declined as civilly as she could, to cultivate much intimacy with the people of fashion in the neighbourhood, and her society was chiefly confined to that of her husband, her brother and Julia.

We will leave Marcia thus laudably employed, and take a view of her sister's conduct.

She and Clifford, on their arrival at Paris, had assumed the character of man and wife; and, without considering how they could support the expense, they took an Hôtel, hired an equipage and servants, and made their appearance in the world in a very brilliant style.—As he had been at Paris before, where he had been well

well liked, he and his pretended wife received at first many civilities; but the moment it was known that he attempted to impose his brother's wife as his own on the world, and that all the particulars of their guilt transpired, they were shunned by all people of character.—Their acquaintance was now limited to that of young libertines of fashion, and *petites maitresses*, who had no reputation to lose.—Melissa's pride was severely mortified by the affronts to which she was daily exposed.—Accustomed by Lord Westland's excessive generosity to profusion, she totally forgot that Clifford's purse would not enable her to make the same elegant appearance she had done formerly:—And when he presumed to remind her of her change of situation, and how unnecessary it was for her to enter into every new fashion that caprice adopted: She flew into a passion, protested she would never be
 controuled

controuled by him, and reproached him with being already tired of her.— Though this was not yet the case, he felt disgusted with her vanity, and displeased with her violence.— Ill humour clouded the countenances of both. — To plague him, she affected to be pleased with the unmeaning gallantry with which she was addressed by some French noblemen, hurried about from one public place to the other, and denied herself nothing that could set off her figure to advantage: She was extremely admired, more, if possible, than she had been in England, and her brain was compleatly turned with flattery: — But she received none from Clifford; his passion was extinguished: — He found her handsome and no more; she had no conversation, no talents, or resources to prolong the illusion of passion. — She knew not how to amuse the languid mind, nor to substitute friend-

ship

ship

ship to love; *that*, indeed, is a sentiment she could not hope to inspire, as it cannot subsist independent of esteem.

Melissa, however, continued to love Clifford, little as her conduct seemed to prove it; she was hurt at his coldness, and upbraided him with it: He, on his part, reproached her with coquetry and extravagance. — A sharp altercation ensued. — Determined not to be restrained by him, she launched into new excesses; when once a woman casts aside that amiable modesty, the greatest charm of her sex, she rushes more boldly than the men into vice, and assumes an effrontery nothing can dash: This was Melissa's case; her countenance was become assured, and a licentious freedom prevailed in her language and manners.

Necessity at last obliged her to adopt a more sober plan of life; the period approached when a wretched being, which owed its existence to guilt, was to enter into the world. — Melissa expected that Clifford would at that time cheer her spirits by his society, but nothing could be further from his thoughts. — He seldom was at home, paid her no attentions, and shewed such a cutting indifference to every thing that concerned her, as convinced her she had entirely lost his heart. — She was now constantly out of humour, dissatisfied with every thing, and whenever she saw Clifford, worked herself up into frightful fits of passion. — The consequence of one of these was a premature labour; she brought into the world a girl about two months after her divorce had passed in the House of Lords.

During

During her confinement she did not experience from her lover those tender cares and that anxious solicitude which so greatly soften that tiresome period.—She recalled to mind, with a bitter sigh, how differently Lord Westland had behaved on a similar occasion, from what his brother did on the present!—Clifford professed an aversion to young children; he seldom visited her, and never would bear his child a moment in the room.—Friends she had none, and but few acquaintance who were disposed to share her confinement.—Soon she was left quite alone, and often destitute of many necessaries, which either Clifford could not, or would not procure her.—Left to her own sad reflections, she passed her time in tears, and in regretting those happy days when her mind was serene and innocent.—Clifford's desertion, his cruel neglect, and his marked contempt for her, now made

her feel not only the wickedness, but the folly of her past conduct. — “Oh!” said she, internally, “that I had never quitted my noble generous Lord, to fly with this treacherous wretch, who leaves me here alone, while he amuses himself, without having a single thought of my sufferings!”

The uneasiness of her mind retarded her recovery; but her present sufferings were only a prelude to much severer woes. — Mr. Clifford was thunder struck at receiving a letter from Lady Leonora Gray, written some months before, and which had not reached him sooner, owing to a mistake in the direction:—It announced to him her eternal indignation for his conduct, her resolution of altering her former intentions in his favour, and a strict prohibition to him ever to appear in her presence. — As Clifford

ford knew how strong her partiality had been towards him, he flattered himself that if he immediately renounced Melissa, and humbled himself before his aunt, he might mollify her resentment; at least it was well worth the trial, and, indifferent as he was become to the weak woman, who had trusted to his vows of eternal love and constancy, it cost him little to break with her.—Indeed, his fortune, as a younger brother, rendered it impossible for him to support her any longer: Some degree of pity for her made him delay his journey for a few days; but, as she still continued to reproach him with coldness, and to render home very disagreeable to him, he resolved to set out for England, as soon as he could raise a little money for her present support; this measure, some little remains of honor whispered to him as indispensable; but he could not pretend to pay her

debts, and, to avoid being witness to her tears and lamentations, he carefully concealed his design.

One morning, as soon as she was awake, her maid informed her, that a person on business wished to speak to her : She ordered him to enter ; his person was unknown to her. — He presented her with a sealed packet, refused to say whence it came, informed her it required no answer, and departed.

Melissa opened it with some degree of trepidation ; it contained a purse full of louis d'ors, and a letter, which she tore open, and read as follows.

“ The situation of my affairs will no longer permit me to continue with you ; and I will be so sincere as to tell you, that the only circumstance I regret, in dissolving our temporary union,

union, is my inability to provide for my child, and leave you in a more flourishing situation.—Whenever it is in my power I shall take care of the former.—The best thing you can do, will be to go to England; Lord Westland's allowance will support you amply.—My prospects in life are blasted by our fatal connection.—Would to God you had not so easily been prevailed upon to listen to me!—Alas! the past cannot be recalled. I was cruelly disappointed of the felicity I expected to have shared with you; indeed, I begin to think with horror of the past:—That you may do so likewise, and recover your health, is the wish of

EDWARD CLIFFORD.

Language is inadequate to describe Melissa's sensations on reading this cruel letter! She fell into fits before she had finished it, and was put sense-

less to bed: By the assistance of the physicians she was at once restored to life, and to a renewal of misery. — She resolved immediately to follow him, and insisted on being allowed to rise: — The efforts made to prevent her, threw her into such a fit of rage and despair, that a violent fever ensued. — She lay delirious, fastened down in her bed, calling vehemently on Clifford, sometimes reproaching him in the bitterest language for his cruel desertion of her, at others expostulating with him in the tenderest terms. — She continued for some time in this deplorable condition; but her youth, and the natural excellence of her constitution, at last got the better of her disease. — With returning health, she recovered sufficient reason to see the folly of pursuing a man, who had not only renounced her in so barbarous a manner, but who had reproached her for her weakness in listening to him:

His

His conduct too, before this last outrage, had evidently denoted symptoms of disgust, therefore she could have no hopes of re-animating a passion that was entirely extinguished.

Melissa's situation at Paris was now become highly disagreeable.—Obliged to appropriate the chief part of the money Clifford had sent her, to the payment of her debts, she had no longer the means of supporting the brilliant figure she had made heretofore. — As she wished nothing more than to fly from herself, she attempted to appear once or twice in public after her recovery, where she had the mortification to experience the disregard and contempt of her acquaintance, and to be exposed to the insulting propositions of some Farmer Generals, who knowing Mr. Clifford had left her, entertained hopes of succeeding him in her favor.—The

confident air with which they addressed her, shewed that they were not only encouraged by the strength of their purses, but by the levity of her character.—But she disdained these offers; confined herself at home; and though in the midst of a populous city, found herself as much in solitude as if she had been in a desert. — Yet here she could enjoy no quiet.—Her servants were insolent and rapacious; and she experienced (as guilt usually does) the contempt of inferiors; and the impossibility of obtaining respect from domestics, who were well-acquainted with her vicious conduct.—They had cruelly neglected her during her illness, she, therefore, determined to discharge them all, and to prepare to quit a country where she had endured the complicated evils of disgrace, contempt, perfidy and sickness.—She hired a lively young Parisian to wait upon her; she then disposed of
all

all her jewels, trinkets and superfluous cloaths, and discharging the remainder of her debts, set out with her child and maid for England:—But carelessly letting the latter see what money she possessed, her new attendant thought fit to appropriate it to her own use, and decamped with it on the road. — Search was made after her, but she could not be found; and Melissa would have been greatly distressed, had she not brought with her some notes from her banker, at Paris, which she had, unknown to her maid, in her pocket book. — These were sufficient to defray her expences to London, where, upon her arrival, she took a small lodging at a milliner's, in Bond-Street, and assumed the name of Mrs. Watson. — She was scarcely settled in her new habitation, when her child, whom she had nursed herself, except during her fever, when another

nurse had supplied her place, died suddenly in her arms, in a fit.—This certainly was, for the poor infant, a happy event; but Melissa, who had found some consolation in her attentions to it, and who doated upon it, was extremely affected by its death.

The variety of misery she had lately suffered, was now encreased by the silence of her father and sister, to whom she had addressed very penitential letters, as soon as she arrived in England: She longed, impatiently, for the arrival of the post, and at last received a packet, directed in her father's hand writing, which contained her letters unopened, enclosed in a blank cover — She was extremely affected at this treatment from her sister; whose mild gentle nature had appeared to unite, with a just detestation of vice, sentiments of compassion for offenders.—She then wrote to her
brother,

brother, but received no answer.— Her quarter's allowance from Lord Westland would not be due for some weeks, and she found herself reduced to her last guinea; and to complete the sum total of her misfortunes, she found herself suspected for an adventurer, by the woman with whom she lodged, who, without much ceremony, gave her notice, that her lodgings would no longer be at her service, after the expiration of the week.

In the evening of the day that the milliner had paid her this unpleasant compliment, she was sitting musing before a little table in her chamber, her head resting on her hands, considering what expedients she could find for her support 'till her allowance became due, when she was roused from her reverie by a little tap at the door, and having desired the person to enter, she was surprized to see a stranger;

stranger, wondering who could have business with so unfortunate a being as herself.

She was much ashamed when he asked her, if it was Miss Melissâ Bumble whom he had the honor to see; she faintly replied in the affirmative; and then he delivered to her a letter, which he said would explain his business. — She found it contained notes to the amount of £300, and a promise of £75 per quarter, to be paid for the future into any banker's hands she would choose to name.

My readers will easily conceive this timely relief was extremely acceptable to her: She eagerly enquired to whom she was so much obliged; but the stranger refused to satisfy her; and having taken her receipt, and received the name of her banker, departed.

Melissâ

Melissa perplexed her brain with conjectures, on the person so kindly disposed towards her. — She could not think it was her father; and she knew her sister had it not in her power to be so generous, nor yet her brother; her suspicions then rested on Clifford, who, perhaps, repenting of his ingratitude, and restored to Lady Leonora's favor, had determined she should partake of his good fortune. — As for Lord Westland, the most distant idea of his generously adding something to what the law obliged him to give her, never occurred to her.

Melissa now determined to quit London, and to seek some private retreat in the country, where, in obscurity, she might secure herself from contempt, and, if possible, forget *all* she had lost.

Before

Before her departure a tender solicitude to know what was become of her daughter, Lady Caroline, prompted her to send a servant she had hired to Lord Westland's house, in Grosvenor-Square, privately, to enquire after her daughter, and obtain some information as to the rest of the family.

—The maid was very intelligent, and acquitted herself extremely well of her commission. — She brought back the following account: That Lord Westland was at Mrs. Lindsay's house in the country; that Lady Caroline Clifford was in Town, and in perfect health; that 'Squire Bumble was at his seat in Berkshire; that his son and daughter were both married, the latter to Sir James Ardent, and the former to the Baronet's niece; and that they were all in the North of England.

Melissa

Melissa was extremely surprized to hear her sister was married to Sir James Ardent; she had fancied Marcia had a penchant for Colonel St. Clairfont; but she supposed motives of ambition had made her prefer the Baronet.—Then, with a sigh, reflecting, that however advantageous this match might be, her own establishment had been still superior; that it was entirely her own misconduct which had deprived her of rank, fortune and consideration in the world; that in exchange she had gained no solid pleasure, but was devoted, for the rest of her days, to infamy; her mind was filled with unavailing regret; and casting a disponding look into futurity, she could not perceive a single ray of hope to cheer her.

Yet if she could see her child once more, she should leave London without repugnance. — Grief and illness
had

had so totally altered her, that she flattered herself, when muffled up in a close cap, no person, who had formerly known her, would now recollect her.

In hopes of finding Lady Caroline in Grosvenor Square Gardens, she repaired thither once or twice unsuccessfully, but at last she saw a beautiful child of about two years old, attended by a nurse and a footman in Lord Westland's livery. — Melissa's heart palpitated with a mixture of pain and pleasure at the sight of her child; she stopped it, with a faltering voice said, something of its beauty, and imprinting one fervent kiss on its forehead, she was obliged, precipitately, to retire, feeling herself unable to conceal her emotions. — Incapable of walking, she got into a chair, and returned home more miserable than before. — Here she was met by the mill-

ner (her landlady) who finding her deportment inoffensive, and that she appeared able to pay for her lodging, had adopted a different style of behaviour, from that she had at first assumed.—This woman civilly desired Melissa to step into her parlour, to see, as she said, something very beautiful. — “ You must know, m’em, that my brother is one of the first mantua-makers in town, and he has just brought one of Miss Lindsay’s wedding gowns for me to see, and to be sure it is one of the most beautiful things eyes ever beheld.” — Melissa’s curiosity raised by this news respecting her old acquaintance, eagerly enquired whom she was going to marry. — “ Bless my heart, m’em,” replied the chattering dame, “ is it possible you should not have heard of her intended nuptials with that great rich Lord - - - what’s his name? — Well, I am the worst in the ver-
sal

fal world at remembering names, that's fartin. — But it is him, m'em, who was, not long ago, divorced from his wife; the vile creature went off (Lord! it makes one shudder to tell it) with his own brother, if you'll believe me, and not near so pretty a man neither as his lordship."—She might have gone on much longer without interruption, when accidentally casting her eyes on her auditress, she perceived she was in a fit.—By proper applications she soon recovered, and shutting herself up in her own apartment, she prepared immediately for her departure into the country, whither she retired with a broken heart.

CHAP.

C H A P. XX.

THE CONCLUSION.

MARCIA found, soon after her marriage, that she must continue to practise that patience to which she had been inured by her Father, and that she had still severe trials to undergo.

Sir James Ardent's passion was not flattering to a woman of delicacy ; it was violent and jealous, and his contempt for her sex was manifest in his discourse and actions. — He was so unjust as to doubt the purity of Marcia's sentiments, because she was Melissa's sister ; a mean distrust of her virtue appeared in his whole conduct towards her. — As he had often heard

Melissa's

Melissa's misconduct attributed to her pernicious friend Lady Wander, he would not allow her to form any intimacy with persons of her own sex ; and if she spoke twice to any man who came to Southcote, he soon found a pretence to drop his acquaintance, — He opened all her letters, and delivered them or not, as he thought proper. — While her brother and Julia continued at Southcote, Marcia kept up her spirits tolerably ; but when they went to a house of their own at a considerable distance from hers, and that she was left tête à tête with Sir James, a sad melancholy overpowered her. — He had kept her above a twelvemonth at Southcote, as London, he said, was a dangerous place for women ; but, alarmed at her altered appearance, he determined to carry her thither, to have the best advice. — The indifference with which she heard this intelligence, convinced him

him that she had no partiality for London; she was therefore, in his opinion, the fitter to be trusted there. — Every day she grew paler and thinner, yet she never complained. — Sir James, who loved her more passionately than ever, and had discovered a thousand virtues in her, of which he had believed women incapable, dismissed his jealous doubts, and became assiduous to please her. — He had ordered his house in Harley-Street to be got ready for his and Lady Ardent's reception: While he was making the necessary arrangements for his journey, Marcia became so weak and languid, that he sent, in a great fright, for a physician. — This Gentleman gave it as his opinion that she was going into a decline, which declaration, made rather abruptly, flung Sir James into a violent passion; he flew like a tyger at the physician, who made a precipitate retreat.

The

The idea of losing Marcia was insupportable to her husband ; he hoped change of air, and the sight of her friends, might have a favourable effect upon her health, and he set out with her for London without loss of time. — As he knew she had long wished to see her Father (who had repeatedly written to Sir James, to remind him of his promise of suffering his daughter to pass three months in each year with him, and who resented the breach of it) he made the Hall his route to London. — Mr. Bumble received Marcia with extravagant demonstrations of joy ; but when he could observe her with more composure, he exclaimed at the sad alteration he noticed in her looks : — That a mental cause might have produced *this* never occurred to him. — “ What the deuce,” cried he to Sir James, “ have you been starving the girl ? Why, she is become quite a skeleton ! ”

skeleton!"—Sir James coloured, and could make no reply, conscious that he had not treated her as she deserved. — Though Marcia felt much satisfaction in seeing her Father stout and hearty, she could not find herself at the place where she and her sister were born, and had inhabited so many years together, without a train of melancholy reflections crouding upon her mind. — Her sad fate had often made her shed deluges of tears, yet she was very imperfectly informed of her story; she knew, indeed, by the public papers that she had been divorced from her Lord, but she was ignorant of her sister's return to England; the letter Melissa had written to her at the Hall had been (as I have before said) returned by the Justice; and, during her abode at Southcote, if any intelligence had been sent her relative to her sister, it was certainly suppressed by Sir James,

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who

who forbid her ever to make any enquiry about her. — She knew Lord Westland had married her friend Sophia Lindsay, and that she behaved to Lady Caroline Clifford with all the tenderness of a real Mother; but still she was inexpressibly anxious to know what was become of her wretched sister: Though she always judged her own actions rigorously, she was ever ready to be indulgent to those of others. — Had Melissa continued to have been guilty and prosperous, she would with horror have averted her eyes from her; but humbled and miserable as she supposed her to be, she thought of her with the tenderest pity, and, though she detested her conduct, still felt she was her sister. — The change of air, however, was beneficial to her health, and when she arrived in town the sight of her friends revived her spirits. — Their society, when Sir James would allow her to share

share it, was the only pleasure she enjoyed in London, for he made her delicate health a pretence for preventing her appearing in public.—Marcia had not the satisfaction of seeing her little niece; Lord and Lady Westland had taken her with them to Ireland, where they were gone to spend some months.—Mrs. Belfield was not in town.

She made some fruitless enquiries after her sister, and was extremely unhappy that she could not learn her fate.—One day as she was passing through Bond-Street, she saw a ribbon she wanted to match in a window, and, stopping her carriage, she went into the shop.—The mistress of it was extremely loquacious, told her, unasked, all her concerns, and that she had a very pretty apartment to let: “It was occupied,” said she, “about four months ago, let me

see, ayé, four months ago, Jackey was just gone to sea, it is four months. — Well as I was saying that very apartment was let to one of the prettiest Ladies I did ever see. — God forgive me, I thought at first as how she was no better than she should be; for here she came without a servant, and with a young child: — So I rather drew up, and grew huffy; for, thinks I, Madam shan't stay here. — Well, and so one day I gave her a piece of my mind; but she said nothing, and, as I found her a quiet sort of a body, I let her afterwards alone; and one day, to amuse her, I shewed her Lady Westland's bridal cloaths; and would you believe it, m'em, if she did not drop down as dead as a herring, and the very next day off she marched! — God knows where, but she paid me honestly howsoever: — So when she was gone, I began rummaging about her room, and what should I find

find but a seal with a cypher and a coronet over it." — Marcia eagerly begged to see it, and remembered it to have been her sister's. — She endeavoured, by means of this woman, to trace out her sister, but ineffectually ; however, she made her a present, and obtained the seal. — This trifling incident revived her uneasiness about Melissa, and she was not sorry to return to her solitude at Southcote ; she set out before Sir James, as he had permitted her to pass some days with her Father, and promised to join her at the Hall. — She there found Mr. and Mrs. Netterville, and, after passing some days pleasantly at her native place, she set out on her journey into the North, her husband being detained on business in town. — On arriving at the inn, where she was to dine, she was tempted, while dinner was preparing, to stroll into the garden, and finding a little gate not locked, which

opened into a meadow, she rambled through it, till she came within a few yards of a neat garden, before a simple clean-looking house. — One of the servants of the inn now overtook her, in her way to this very house, with a pot of broth in her hand. — Lady Ardent enquired of the servant who lived there, and was answered that she did not know the Lady's name, but that she was extremely ill, in a deep decay, and was not long returned from Bristol, where she had been without receiving any benefit by the waters.

Marcia's compassionate heart was touched at this account; she asked if the Lady was young, and was answered in the affirmative, and that she appeared to have been very handsome. — Unwilling to detain the servant, she told her she would wait her return, to ask further questions. — The girl
came

came back very soon, and told her that the Lady was extremely bad, and would probably not live many days longer.

Marcia then enquired if any physician attended her, and learned that a very eminent one had been sent for, upon her arrival at the inn; but that he had lately discontinued his visits, finding he could be of no further use to her. — “Surely,” continued the girl, “it is a pity, a sad pity, so sweet a Lady should die so young; and they say too, she is as patient as an angel; her maid does nothing but cry about her.” — Marcia more and more interested about the sick stranger, asked if she could not go back and enquire of the maid her Lady’s name. The girl obeyed, and returning, told her it was Watson, and that she was a widow Lady, but knew no more. — “She has often said,” continued the girl, “that she fancied it was grief

that was destroying her Lady, for that she appeared dying of a broken heart."

— Marcia now returned to the inn little disposed to eat; she had some confused idea, that the Lady who had lodged in Bond-Street, and whom she had imagined to be her sister, had borne the name of Watson; so as soon as Mrs. Astley, the landlady, appeared with her dinner, she detained her, to learn more concerning the sick Lady.—She had so often travelled that road, that she was well acquainted with Mrs. Astley, and eagerly desired to have what intelligence she could give of Mrs. Watson.

Mrs. Astley, putting on a very wise look, and begging her Ladyship's pardon for the liberty she was going to take, after much needless circumlocution, informed her, that about two months before, this Lady, who called herself Watson, came to her house

house in her way to the Hot Wells ; that she had at that time only a glimpse of her ; but that on her return, about a fortnight since, she was taken extremely ill at her house ; and then she had a clear view of her person, which, though terribly emaciated, struck her as being very like her Ladyship's sister : That the poor Lady, incapable of proceeding on her journey, was obliged to remain at her house, where she was so much incommoded with the noise, that she had persuaded her to consent to be removed to her present habitation, which belonged to her son ; and that Mrs. Watson had expressed great satisfaction to find herself in a clean, quiet apartment. — Mrs. Astley added, that she had prevailed on her to see a physician, and that she had done all in her power to serve her.

Marcia felt greatly agitated at this account : Mrs. Astley seemed to entertain little doubt of the sick stranger's being her sister ; and, seeing how much Lady Ardent was affected, proposed to go with her to the Meadow-House, where, placed behind a screen, she might satisfy her curiosity without the stranger's knowledge. — Marcia eagerly embraced this proposal, and, supporting her trembling frame by Mrs. Astley's arm, went with her to the house. — Mrs. Watton was accustomed to receive her humane landlady every evening ; she passed the greatest part of the day on a couch, as she found she could breathe more freely there than in bed. — To be brief, Marcia found her sad *presentiment* too well founded ; for she had no sooner cast her eyes on the melancholy object before her, than she recognized the once beautiful Melissa ! — She was obliged instantly
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to retire, to give vent to the anguish of her soul.—Mrs. Astley attempted to console her, but she could urge nothing that could have that effect.—Marcia now determined to make her sister a visit, and sending Mrs. Astley to prepare her, by degrees, to receive it, waited her return with a beating heart.—Mrs. Astley, who did not want for sense, executed her commission extremely well.—She introduced Lady Ardent to her sister, who, though extremely affected at seeing her, behaved with surprizing fortitude.

After a thousand tender embraces, Melissa, little by little, as her strength permitted, related the whole of her sad story; and coming to the circumstance of Lord Westland's intended marriage, she continued thus:—
 “Though I had set little value on Lord Westland's heart (wicked foolish creature that I was!) yet, when

my eyes began to be opened, and that all my dreams of happiness were over; then I appreciated it as I ought.— Alas! what would I not have given to have been once more the happy object of his attentions! — The more I reflected on my conduct, the more I detested myself. — My only object now was to fly from the world; and bury myself in solitude; at a little distance from Barnet I found a small house, which suited my wishes, and thither I retired with two maids and a man.—I avoided all communication with my neighbours, and never stirred beyond my garden, except of a Sunday, when I went constantly to church. My health gradually declined, and I took no measures to restore it; indeed, the constant grief that oppressed my mind could not fail of undermining my constitution. — An affecting discourse one day from the pulpit, which adverted to the crimes of which I had been

been guilty, affected me so much, that I fainted away; I was carried into the air, and the rector (Doctor Edwards) one of the best of men, insisted upon seeing me safe home; I would willingly have declined this civility, but he would not be refused, and as I found myself extremely weak, I leant upon his arm till I reached my own door; there he took leave of me, and asked my permission to enquire after my health another time.

—There was something so engaging and venerable in his appearance, that I determined to admit his visit, and accordingly when he called the day following, I ordered my servant to shew him into the parlour.—He expressed an obliging concern about my health, and finding that I had consulted no person for advice, he pressed me to see a physician.—I could not help saying, that I felt pleasure in its decline, as I wished for nothing

so much as a release from the miseries of this world. — “I am ignorant, madam,” said he, “what misfortunes have befallen you; but, believe me, it is your duty to do all in your power to prolong that life which, doubtless, God, for very wise purposes, hath thought fit to afflict. — To neglect the restoration of your health is a species of suicide. — By a patient submission to the divine decrees, your sufferings become meritorious; let me then prevail on you to have recourse to medical assistance, and if the griefs of your mind can receive any mitigation, open your heart to me. — Think me not, madam, impertinently curious, but believe that I wish to impart the consolation you seem so much in need of. — Religion, madam, is a certain resource to the afflicted; perhaps I may be so fortunate as to present objects to you, through a medium from which you have hitherto never viewed them.”

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—I was struck with the rector's discourse, and resolved to submit to the shame of an ample confession of my sins. — I have not strength, my dear sister, to repeat his observations upon my story; but convinced of my contrition, he encouraged me to hope, that the various misfortunes I had endured, would, in the eyes of a good and gracious God, be considered as sufficient punishment for my offences; and convinced me I had great reason to be thankful to his mercy, for giving me time for repentance. — His pious comfortable discourses had a very happy effect upon my mind; but my health was too far gone to receive any benefit from medical assistance. — However, at Doctor Edwards's entreaty, I went to Bristol, you know the rest, and I am too much exhausted to add any more."

Marcia

Marcia had attended to this recital with those sensations it could not fail of inspiring; her tears deprived her of speech. — Melissa pressing her hand tenderly, added, “I had but one wish ungratified, which prevented my dying in peace; and that was, the consolation of seeing one of my family. — Heaven has been graciously pleased to hear my prayers, and has sent my dear sister to close my eyes. — Weep not, dear Marcia; be assured I feel an internal content, to which my heart has been a stranger ever since I lost sight of virtue and innocence. — Tell me, now, all that has befallen you, and particularly every thing that relates to my poor little girl. Ah! Marcia, there — — — but I repine not!”

Marcia then gave her sister a full detail of every branch of her family; and when she had satisfied her curiosity,

riosity, Melissa enquired if she knew who had so generously added to her income. — Marcia had learned from Mr. Netterville, in her last visit to the Hall, that it was Lord Westland; he had heard Mr. Bumble boast of his obduracy, and disapproving of it, had immediately assisted her as has already been mentioned. — Melissa lifted up her eyes to heaven, and uttered a fervent prayer for his happiness.

The two sisters then sat tenderly gazing at each other; but Melissa fell into a fainting fit, which weakened her extremely; her voice became inarticulate, and she was put to bed. — Yet while she could still make herself understood, she again mentioned her wishes that Lord Westland might be happy, and that her daughter might not detest her memory; but learn, from her example, to avoid the allurements

ments of vice. — “Alas! if the gay and thoughtless Clifford,” added she, “were now here, perhaps this scene might touch his heart, and he too might repent! — God grant that he may not be cut off in the midst of his guilty career!”

Marcia determined not to desert her sister; she dispatched an express to her father and brother, with an account of what had happened to her, and sent a servant to Sir James, with a letter, telling him the cause of her delay, and the resolution she had formed in consequence thereof. — This letter determined Sir James to leave town immediately, and join her.

The Sisters had passed the night together; the dying one altogether as composed as the other was disturbed; it was evident, however, that Melissa's end approached fast: Her
breath

breath grew shorter; her weakness encreased; but her intellects continued unimpaired; and she seemed employed in mental prayer. — At last she made signs to her maid to bring her a box, and to give it with the key to her sister, who, by her direction opened it, and found it contained a small packet for herself, and some letters sealed and directed, which her sister made her comprehend, were to be delivered after her decease. Marcia sat bathed in tears by her sister's bed, holding her hand. — All at once Melissa pressed her's, feebly, to her lips, and inwardly saying, "God bless," expired without a groan.

Just as this unfortunate young woman expired, Mr. Netterville arrived; he pressed her lips which were still warm, and bewailed her untimely end; but his grief did not prevent his attention to the amiable Marcia, whom he took

took in his arms, more dead than alive, and carried her out of the room.——

His tender consolations somewhat soothed his sister, and Sir James, who arrived presently after, entreated her to leave this scene of misery, and accompany him to town.—Marcia, who had never yet disobeyed him, shewed in this instance, a strong reluctance to leave her poor sister's remains; but her maid, and Mrs. Astley, promised not to neglect any decent duty; and Mr. Netterville said he would, himself, see the last melancholy offices performed to his sister, and prevail on his father to allow the corpse to be laid in the family vault, at the Hall. — Marcia then examined the box anew, and found letters for herself, her father, brother, Lord Westland and Doctor Edwards; these were immediately sent as directed, and cost those who received them many tears; (though Mr. Bumble the fewest) the
small

small packet contained Melissa's picture, and other trinkets, which she had bequeathed to her sister.

Poor Lady Ardent, with a heavy heart, arrived in town. — Her grief softened Sir James's disposition; and he began to treat her with indulgence.

Lord Westland, who was informed by Marcia of the particulars of Melissa's death, was much affected at perusing her penitential letter. — He pressed her little girl in his arms; saw, with pleasure, that she would have her mother's beauty; and flattered himself, the education he would give her, added to Lady Westland's admirable example, would guard her from her faults.

On Melissa's return from abroad, he had heard of her distress from her father;

father; pity touched his heart; he could not bear, that the woman whom he had so fondly adored; should be reduced to the scanty allowance the law obliged him to give her. — He, therefore, privately added to it, and Mr. Netterville had been informed of it by Lord Westland's Agent, for he, himself, carefully concealed every generous action he performed. — Mr. Netterville had endeavoured to find out the place of his sister's residence; she had ever been his favorite; but he could not discover it.

Lord Westland's extravagant passion for beauty had been much abated since his fatal connection with Melissa. — After his divorce he determined to remarry; to this he was induced by a partiality for a domestic life, and a strong desire to have a son, that his worthless brother might not inherit his title and estate. — As he thought
he

he had gone on a wrong plan before, he resolved to be well acquainted with the character and understanding of his future wife; *1846* now appeared to him the most essential points. —

The frequent opportunities he had of seeing Sophia Lindsay, convinced him that she was formed to make any reasonable man perfectly happy; and he considered what an advantage it would be to his daughter, to have so amiable and accomplished a step-mother. — Sophia was then lamenting the loss of her tender, respectable parent. As soon as the first violence of her grief abated, she consented to an union with a man, whom she had ever esteemed. — Her good sense, amiable manners, and the excellence of her heart, recompensed him for his past sufferings. — Reason had now guided his choice. — If he loved her with less passion than he had done his former wife, he esteemed her more,
 and

and he enjoyed with her pleasures that time could not diminish. — Her numerous accomplishments, polished conversation, and well-informed understanding, afforded never-failing resources.

She made the best of Mothers to Lady Caroline, who shared with her own children her maternal attentions,

Beachly, after Melissa's flight, became so odious to Lord Westland, that he could never prevail on himself to return there. — He divided his time between Westland-Castle (which he amused himself with repairing and beautifying) and London.

Mr. Clifford had found his aunt inexorable, and, being extremely distressed in his circumstances, he had been constrained to accept of a commission in the army, and afterwards
to

to exchange the luxuries of St. James's for the hardships and coarse fare of America, where he had met with his death in an engagement. — His fate was little lamented, except by Lady Leonora, who could not hear of his death unmoved, however the reflection of his worthlessness dried her tears; and she consoled herself some time after, by adopting Lord Westland's second son, to whom she bequeathed her estate.

Miss Gray's unamiable person, and still more unamiable manners, condemned her to a state of celibacy.

Lady Ardent's spirits, after her sister's death, were so extremely low, that Sir James changed his design of carrying her back into the North; he even endeavoured to prevail on her to go into the world; but his efforts were ineffectual for a great while.

Mrs. Belfield's arrival in town was a great consolation to her; she informed her that she shortly expected

her brother from America, and that his wife had been dead for some months, and that, though he had been greatly weaned from his passion by his long separation from her, that he had been extremely affected at hearing of her death.

Marcia fighed at hearing this intelligence ; she found, alas ! she could not yet hear St. Clairfont's name without emotion, and she imposed upon herself the law of never speaking of him, and as much as possible to avoid hearing of him, she resolved seldom to see Mrs. Belfield.

One day as she was at Court, the sudden appearance of this fatal enemy to her repose almost overcame her flurried spirits ; she was obliged to summon all her fortitude to her aid : St. Clairfont was just returned from America, covered with laurels, and presented that day at Court. — Marcia, in traversing the croud, could not avoid passing by him, and not to be

be particular, she muttered some little compliments : His answer was in the same style ; a transient glance escaped both, but she quickly averted her eyes, not a little shocked at the sadness pictured in his countenance. — Extremely agitated, she hastened from him to her chair, where she reproached herself for the little command she had obtained over her unfortunate partiality. — From this moment she determined to break off all particular intimacy with Mrs. Belfield, being well convinced that the least indulgence to the passions, though with the purest intentions, never fail to have fatal consequences : — Nor could Marcia help blaming Mrs. Belfield for not having warned her, whom she should meet at Court. — She adhered strictly to her plan, and Mrs. Belfield, who loved her extremely, was pained by her behaviour ; Marcia did not think it right to explain the motives of it, and Mrs. Belfield, who remem-

bered the observations she had made on Marcia at Bath, could not help admiring her prudence, greatly as she suffered by its effects herself.

Marcia, now more wretched than ever, pressed Sir James to let her return into the country, whither he was himself going to hunt for the last time that season ; but, as he was to be accompanied by a large party of fox-hunters, he refused her request, and left her in town, little thinking he should see her no more : Yet he had scarce been a week absent, when one day, being keenly in pursuit of a fox, his horse taking a flying leap, missed the stroke, and falling, broke Sir James's neck.

To say Marcia was distracted with grief at receiving this news would not be credited ; but it easily will, that she was extremely shocked at his untimely end. — His late kindness to her had engaged her gratitude, and she

she had totally forgotten all he had at first made her suffer.

She feigned no immoderate grief; but was affected at the idea of his going unprepared before his Maker, and she made it a point scrupulously to settle his domestic concerns, as she knew he would himself have wished.

— She found he had acted very generously by her; besides a large jointure, he had bequeathed her his house in town, a considerable estate, and a sum of ready-money.— Her door was now again open to Mrs. Belfield; but she prudently resolved to hasten out of town, and pass the first months of her mourning at her Father's: There the lenient hand of time composed all her sorrows; her health recovered its wonted vigour, and her spirits their natural tone.

St. Clairfont's services had been rewarded by his sovereign, who had given him the red ribbon. — As soon as decency permitted, he pressed
Marcia

Marcia to allow him to repair with his sister to the Hall. — At last he received her consent. — There he acknowledged the tender impression she had made upon him, when first he became acquainted with her, in Grosvenor-Square; but that honor had then obliged him to conceal it. — He did not disguise from her, that Theresa's death had greatly affected him. — All that he had suffered, and the whole of his sentiments, were now laid open to her view. — She was equally candid in disclosing to him the secrets of her heart; and in about a twelve-month after Sir James Ardent's death, she gave her hand to Sir Henry St. Clairfont. — Mr. Bumble expressed the greatest satisfaction at his daughter's choice; he said he believed there did not exist a more brave honest fellow than St. Clairfont. — Need I add, that two minds formed like Marcia's and Sir Henry's, tasted the utmost felicity together? Every circumstance tended to promote

promote it: The reflections of their past sufferings; the cruel difficulties that had seemed insurmountable bars to their union, and the approbation of their own hearts. — The harmony of their souls might have rendered them happy in the most humble, confined, sphere; they had not, however, this trial, for their situation was very affluent. — Sir Henry St. Clairfont had a regiment, and his estate was yearly improving: Marcia was extremely rich. — They passed their winters at her house in Harley-Street; and their summers, partly at St. Clairfont, in Devonshire, and partly at the Hall. — They were blessed with many lovely children, and had the comfort of softening the joyless period of old age, by devoting every possible care and attention to Mr. Bumble; he doated upon them both; and took more pleasure in seeing their smiling infants run about the Hall, than ever he had done in his own.

Mr.

Mr. Netterville had suffered too severely for the indiscretions of his youth, not to profit by them: He was fondly attached to his wife, who was amiable and domestic. — He lived chiefly at Southcote, which, with a considerable part of Sir James Ardent's property, devolved upon him, at his death, in right of Julia.

Sir Harry Basil prevailed on Mrs. Belfield to accept of his hand, and she made him a most excellent wife.

Sir John and Lady Wander were, by their extravagance, reduced to the greatest distress; their old age was joyless and contemptible, passed in mutual reproaches and endless altercations. — Colonel Philamour never recovered the use of his arm; he wandered about the continent poor and miserable, and never returned to his native country.

FINIS.